

# SCARLET *Street*

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A REALLY  
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ISSUE!

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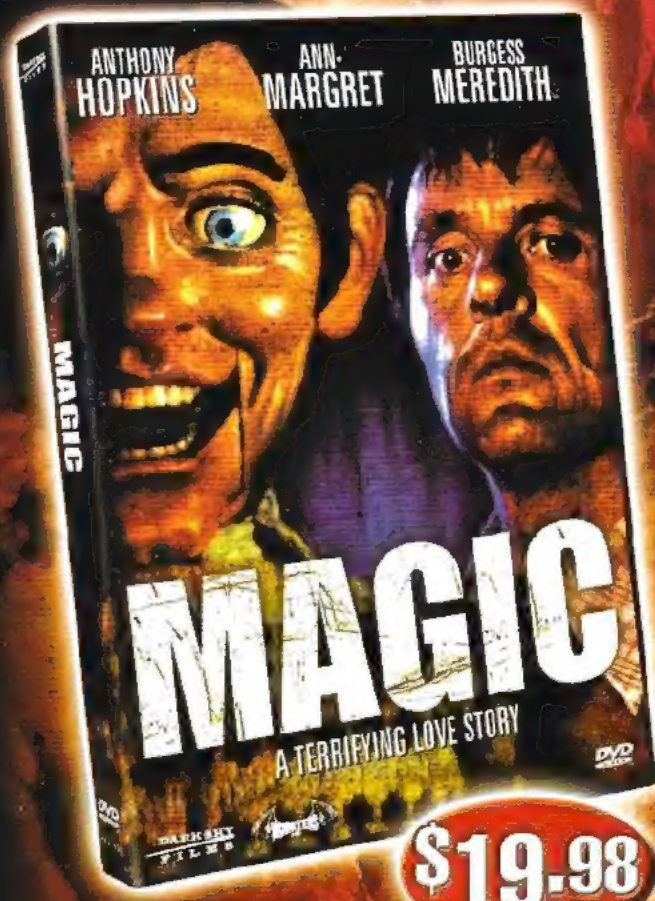
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- Fats & Friends Featurette
- An Interview with Victor J. Kemper
- An Interview with Anthony Hopkins
- Anthony Hopkins Radio Interview
- Ann-Margret Make-Up Test
- Theatrical Trailers
- TV and Radio Spots
- Photo Gallery

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR  
Richard Valley

LAYOUT  
Tom Amorosi, Richard Valley  
ASSISTANT EDITOR  
Dan Clayton

ASSOCIATE EDITORS  
Ted A. Bohus, Ken Hanke  
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR  
Kevin G. Shinnick  
Phone: (201) 941-0897  
Fax: (201) 445-0034

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR  
Forrest J Ackerman

BACK ISSUE INFORMATION  
(201) 445-0034 / Fax (201) 445-0034

E-mail—reditor@scarletstreet.com

Website—www.scarletstreet.com

#### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Tom Amorosi, Michael Barnum, John F. Black, J. Michael Click, David Del Valle, John Dods, Jack Randall Earles, M. J. Elliott, Bob Gutowski, Ken Hanke, Jim Holifield, Cortlandt Hull, Bruce Kimmel, Erich Kuersten, Lelia Loban, John J. Mathews (The News Hound), Barry Monush, T. J. Moore, Ron Morgan, Brooke Perry, Earl Roesel, Farnham Scott, Drew Sullivan

#### RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

Anthony Dale,  
Laser Joe Failla, Farnham Scott

WEST COAST CORRESPONDENT  
Todd Livingston

#### CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Bill Chancellor, John E. Payne

SCARLET STREET WEBMASTER  
Joyce K. Meyer



#### SPECIAL THANKS

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## Features and Departments

- 4 Scarlet Letters
- 12 Frankly Scarlet
- 16 Lugosi's Dracula Cape Revealed
- 17 Forrest J Ackerman's  
Crimson Chronicles
- 18 The News Hound
- 20 Max, Mickey, and Blake in a Box
- 22 Screen and Screen Again
- 28 An Hour to Kill: The Early Poirots
- 32 B.I.G. Business: Bert I. Gordon
- 38 Small Wonder: Susan Gordon
- 42 Tormented: An Appreciation
- 46 Not a Puppet on a String:  
Kenny Miller
- 52 The Sci-Fi Boys Meet the Monsters
- 54 Singing on a Star:  
Musicalizing The Last Starfighter
- 56 Lex Luthor Meets the Press:  
Lyle Talbot
- 61 Lex Luthor Returns
- 68 Being Darren McGavin:  
Double Duty
- 70 Book Ends
- 72 Film Noir on DVD
- 81 Classifieds

COVER: WAR OF THE COLOSSAL BEAST (designed by Tom Amorosi)



# Scarlet Letters



I want to thank all those who contributed to the latest issue of *Scarlet Street* (Issue #54) for a truly fantastic read. You should all be very proud of your work. Consistently, *Scarlet Street* is the best written, best looking, and most interesting journal devoted to classic horror, sci-fi, and fantasy films by a wide margin. I enjoyed this issue even more than most because so much of it was devoted to Val Lewton, but I look forward to every new issue of *Scarlet Street* and I hope its publication never ends. Great job, Richard—and to your staff.

Richard R. Adams  
Vicenza, Italy

*On behalf of my staff and from one Richard to another, I thank you.*

I was at the local Barnes & Noble this weekend and happened to notice *Scarlet Street* #54 in the entertainment section—am sorry that I missed the first 53 issues! I wasn't aware that there existed a magazine that would still appeal to some classic horror fans, who prefer atmosphere over sensationalism and gore.

As noted by Zacherley in the magazine, "I especially love the way it's printed on glossy paper and with so many color pages." I appreciate the articles and reviews, too. It's also nice to learn more about films I've long treasured, as well as becoming acquainted with some lesser known, but fun films.

I'll have to see what I can do to catch up on those first 53 issues. Thanks for this quality work.

Roger Slawta  
Vestal, NY

*Get them while you can, Roger—and the same goes for the rest of our readers. We're running very low on a number of back issues. Several are already unavailable, so if you've ever wanted a complete set of Scarlet Streets, it appears to be now or never.*

So many good things in *Scarlet Street* #54, but I'll single out a few that I especially enjoyed. Roy Frumkes' interview and story about Simone Simon. The pictures were priceless. The title page was stunning and worthy of framing. Richard Valley's talk with Chad Allen and all the details on the filming of his detective show, which is not seen in my area. The second part of Todd Livingston's interview with Virginia Mayo—another title page stunner of a photo. A bit taken aback at her digs at Doris Day, but there you are.

Of the DVD reviews I especially appreciated Bruce Kimmel's take on *THE HIGH AND THE MIGHTY*, Jim Hollifield's write-up on the Hayley Mills DVD trifecta, and Michael D. Walker's review of Tyrone Power's DVDs from Fox.

Another home run for *Scarlet Street*. The regular columns were informative

and entertaining, and the photos and captions never fail to amuse and inform.

Jack Randall Earles  
Mooresville, IN

Latest ish was the cat's pajamas. Special kudos to Tom Amorosi on his Simone Simon collage, Roy Frumke's article, and Don Mankowski's info on Rhubarb—uh, Orangey. Still delving deep and reading away.

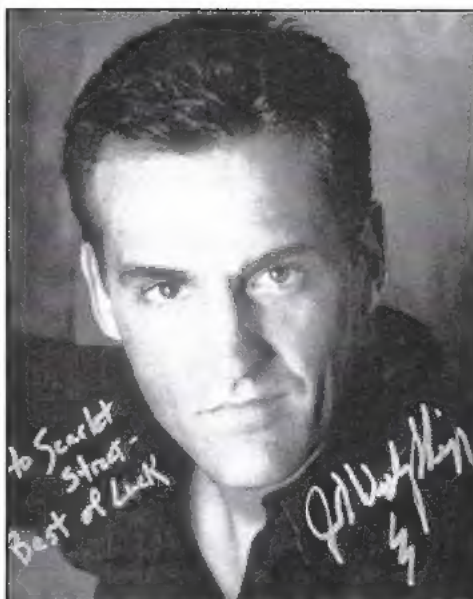
Dick Siegel  
Staten Island, NY

What a spectacular job, Richard. As an editor, I loved the layout: wonderfully creative, and those almost two-color Technicolor pages were voluptuous. As a writer, I couldn't have been more pleased with what you did with my article, and how you used the visual materials I sent. If readers aren't sucked into that article and drown in it, I'll be shocked.

In addition, I liked the rest of the magazine. You shamed me with your piece on the Lewton DVD. For Films in Review ([filmsinreview.com](http://filmsinreview.com)) I listened to every commentary except Haberman's! Good lord! Am I going to have to print a retraction?

I liked the choice of articles and reviews (Rhubarb... I Maybe that was a stretch.) I more or less read it from cover to cover... and started reading before I got to my piece; that's how enticing it was.

**WANTED! MORE  
HOT FLASHES LIKE...**



**JOHN WESLEY SHIPP**

I actually have a quibble and a half, but the overall work was so remarkable, I refuse to divulge them. Best, and congratulations again on a great, loving commitment to your magazine.

Roy Frumkes  
New York, NY

*Roy, it was an honor and a pleasure to publish your wonderful reminiscences of Simone Simon. Let's hope we can work together again sometime.*

Got my copy of *Scarlet Street* #54 in the mail today. I paged through it several times, and was really impressed by the overall look of the issue. The layout was superb, with sharp, clear photos and vibrant colors. I've got to hand it to Tom and Richard; you guys have truly mastered the art of the modern day monster mag. A great issue from cover to cover and not one picture of Misty Mundae anywhere to be found!

The Simone Simon article was a gem. It was nice to hear that she aged gracefully despite the vision problems, and still had a lot of spunk. Nice photo of Virginia Mayo's gams, too.

Mark Daughtrey  
Lexington, VA

Richard, I happened to see your kind words about our book *Live Fast, Die Young: The Wild Ride of Making Rebel Without a Cause* on the *Scarlet Street* Message Boards and I just wanted to say I really appreciate it. Your interview with Ann Doran was really helpful to us and I want to thank you for that as well. I really like your magazine a lot. You run a lot of interesting stories and interviews that other magazines wouldn't even think of running.

Al Weisel

<http://home.nyc.rr.com/alweisel/>

*Live Fast, Die Young: The Wild Ride of Making Rebel Without a Cause* is reviewed on page 70 of this issue.

I recently watched *IT HAPPENS EVERY SPRING*, and it reminded me about the ending of *RHUBARB*, wherein Paul Douglas shows up briefly as the man in the park. It's odd that he'd be selected for a cameo in a baseball-themed movie on the strength of that one earlier film. *ANGELS IN THE OUTFIELD* was the same year as *RHUBARB* (1951), and he probably wasn't a well-known actor by

*Continued on page 10*



# DEL TENNEY TRIPLE FEATURE!

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*The Curse of the Living Corpse* is the second ghoulish feature, notable for being the debut film of two-time Academy Award® nominee **Roy Scheider** (*Jaws*, *The French Connection*, *All That Jazz*) and also starring **Candace Hilligoss** from *Carnival of Souls*. Ignoring the commands of a ghoulish will-reading leaves the family fending off papa's grasp from beyond the grave!

*Violent Midnight* (aka *Psychomania*) boasts the debuts of **James Farentino** (*The Final Countdown*, *Dead & Buried*) and **Dick Van Patten** (*Eight is Enough*), and also features two-time Academy Award nominee **Sylvia Miles** (*Midnight Cowboy*, *Andy Warhol's Heat*), and **Jean Hale** (*In Like Flint*). With a trenchcoat and black gloves, Del pre-dates the Italian giallo as an axe murderer is loose in a New England town.

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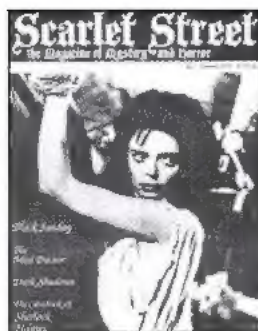




#1 (Reprint): Two covers (including the original), plus a History of *Scarlet Street* and the original text, including *THE FLASH*, *PERRY MASON*, *DARK SHADOWS*, *PSYCHO*, *SUPERBOY*, *POIROT*, *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND*, *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*, and more!



#2: *HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM*, DC Comics Gallery of Villains, *Horror Italian Style*, *ATLANTIS THE LOST CONTINENT*, *FLASH*, *SUPERBOY*, *PERRY MASON*, *THE GOLDEN YEARS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*, *DARK SHADOWS*, Dean Hargrove, and more!



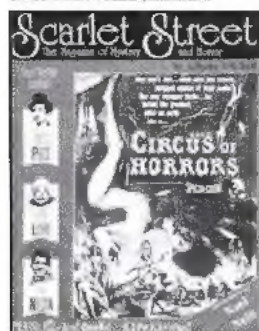
#3: *THE MAD DOCTOR*, Martin Kneale, John Howard, *THE LODGER*, *NIGHT OF THE HUNTER*, *BATMAN*, *Horror Italian Style*, *TARZAN*, *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*, *The Women Who Played The Woman*, *THE DANCING MEN*, *THE NAVAL TREATY*, and more!



#4: Christopher Lee, *THE RETURN OF DRACULA*, Forrest Ackerman, Zacherley, *SUPERBOY's* Gerard Christopher, *BURN WITCH BURN*, *WEIRD WOMAN*, *THE CRUCIFER OF BLOOD*, *NICK & NORA*, *YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN*, *By Lovecraft Possessed*, *POIROT*, and more!



#5: Jack Larson, Barbara Hale, Christopher Lee, Patrick Macnee, Jeremy Brett, Edward Hardwicke, *STAR TREK*, *THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED*, Nardisco Ibanez Serador, Universal vs Hammer, *HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*, *Murder by Radio*, *Horror Hosts*, *POIROT*, and more!



#6: *CIRCUS OF HORRORS*, Noel Neill, David Nelson, *VAMPIRE CIRCUS*, *THE MASTER BLACKMAILER*, George Bantz, Enca Romborg, *GONILLA AT LARGE*, *I, Horror Italian Style*, *GORGON*, *SERSEKI*, *THE CROOKED MAN*, *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN*, *7 FACES OF DR. LAO*, *CAPTIVE WILD WOMAN*, *FREAKS*, and more!



#7: Vincent Price, John Moulder-Brown, Yvette Vickers, *TOMBS OF LIGEIA*, Joan Hickson, *THEY DO IT WITH MIRRORS*, *BLUEBEARD*, Elizabeth Shepherd, *THE SUSSEX VAMPIRE*, *THE SPECKLED BAND*, *INNOCENT BLOOD*, Jeremy Paul, *HOUSE OF WAX*, *PIT AND THE PENDULUM*, *LAURA*, *THE FLY*, and more!



#8: Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Jeremy Brett, Rosalie Williams, *SLEEPING MURDER*, *BRAMSTOKER'S DRACULA*, John Moulder-Brown, Rebecca Eaton, *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER*, *MARTIN*, *The Mystery of the Cushing Tapes*, *THE BLUE CARBUNCLE*, *CAPTAIN KRONOS*, *VAMPIRE HUNTER*, *G.I. HUNGER*, and more!



#9: Richard Denning, Joan Bennett, Thomas Beck, *MANIA*, *CHARLIE CHAN AT THE OPERA*, Peter Cushing, Veronica Carlson, *THE BLACK SCORPION*, Danny DeVito, *DARK SHADOWS*, R. Chetwynd-Hayes, *How to Make a Frankenstein Monster*, *THE ELIGIBLE BACHELOR*, *I LOVE MYSTERY*, *THE GORGON*, and more!



#10: Tommy Kirk, Tim Considine, Beverly Garland, *THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE*, *THE HARDY BOYS*, *TEN LITTLE INDIANS*, *BATMAN*, *THE ANIMATED SERIES*, *GIFT OF CAB*, *THE LAST VAMPIRE*, Kevin Conroy, Loren Lester, *THE ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE*, *THE NORWOOD BUILDER*, and more!



#11: Shelley Winters, Curtis Harrington, Gale Sondergaard, *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*, *BATMAN*, *THE ANIMATED SERIES*, Bob Hastings, Paul Williams, *THE SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES BACK*, *THE FANTASTIC FOUR*, Jay Underwood, Rebecca Staab, and more!



#12: Ruth Roman, *THE KILLING KIND*, *THE UNINVITED*, Ruth Hussey, *I BURY THE LIVING*, Aron Kincaid, Carroll Borland, *The Bela Lugosi Scambook*, Elizabeth Russell, *DISC-O-TEEN: Zacherley's Lost TV Show*, Bobby "Tonic" Fickett, Kevin Whately, *INSPECTOR MORSE*, *THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE*, and more!



#13: Ida Lupino, Terry Kilburn, Bill Campbell, *Lovecraft on Film*, Vincent Price Tribute, Roger Corman, *ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*, *FIEND WITHOUT A FACE*, *CREATURE OF DESTRUCTION*, *TALES OF THE CITY*, Howard Duff, *THE ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE*, Jeffrey Combs, Aron Kincaid, and more!



#14: Barbara Shelley, Ann Blyth, Robert Bloch, *PSYCHO*, Jack Larson, Noel Neill, Edward Hardwicke, John Waters, *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED*, *SERIAL MOM*, *LOIS & CLARK: NEW ADVENTURES*, *BATMAN III*, *WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?*, Curtis Harrington, *WOLF*, *THE STRANGLER*, *THE EMPTY HOUSE*, and more!



#15: Johnny Sheffield, Acquanetta, Michael Ripper, *TARZAN AND THE LEOPARD WOMAN*, Quatermass, Hammett in Hollywood, Marcus D'Amico, *TALES OF THE CITY*, Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee Reunited, *THE MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*, Val Guest, Jonathan Freeman, Brad Kane, *THE SHADOW*, and more!



#16: *X-FILES*, *NIGHTSTALKER*, Darren McGavin, David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Jack Ginnage, Carol Ann Sost, Doug Hutchison, Jerry Hardin, John Fiedler, Neil Jordan, *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*, *The Life of Dwight Frye*, *ED WOOD*, Peter Cushing Tribute, and more!



#17: Ann Doran, Dabbs Greer, Herman Cohen, III *THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE*, Jan Murray, *WHO KILLED TEDDY BEAR?*, Gary Conway, Don Johnson, *THE SKULL*, Al Feldstein, Virginia Remembers James Dean, Jack Ginnage, *REBEL HIGHWAY*, *THE HARDY BOYS*, and more!



#18: Michael Gough, *BATMAN FOREVER*, Interview with the Vampire, Philo Vance, *SPIDER-MAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES*, Gray Morrow, Herman Cohen, *BLACK ZOO*, Stan Lee, *THE X-FILES*, John Semper, Tarzan, *THE MAN WITH THE TWISTED LIP*, and more!



#19: *A STUDY IN TERROR*, John Neville, *BATMAN FOREVER*, Brad Pitt, Joel Schumacher, Robert Quarry, William Marshall, *COUNT YORGA*, *BLACULA*, *THE OUTER LIMITS*, Herman Cohen, *JUDGE DREDD*, Bob Kane, *Sherlock Holmes Meets Elly Queen*, *TALES OF THE CITY*, and more!



#20: Deborah Kerr, Martin Stephens, Russ Tamblyn, Jeremy Brett, David Wayne, Elizabeth Russell, *PORTRAIT OF JENNIE*, Mich Pileggi, *X-FILES*, *The Subtle Terror of Val Lewton*, *THE HAUNTING*, *THE INNOCENTS*, Mark Hamill, John Carpenter, *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED*, and more!





#21: Jeremy Brett Tribute, Farley Granger, Pat Hitchcock, Hillary Brooke, REAR WINDOW, David Burke, Edward Hardwicke, John Michael Hayes, Rosalie Williams, INVADERS FROM MARS, Raymond Burr, Zacherley, Mystery of the Missing Director: Al Adamson, and more!



#22: LAURA, David Raksin, THE X-FILES, Billy Zane, THE PHANTOM, Jeremy Brett, MAD GHOUL, Anne Baxter, David Bruce, Herman Stein, Irving Gertz, Lee Falk, Amanda McBroom Remembers Her Father: David Bruce, John Michael Hayes, William B. Davis, and more!



#23: Christopher Atkins, Irish McCalla, Ray Harryhausen, Joe Lara, TERROR IS A MAN, TARZAN: THE EPIC ADVENTURES, PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE, Randal Kleiser, THE X-FILES, ZOMBIES ON BROADWAY, The Children of Kong, Sherlock Holmes on CD, and more!



#24: THE MASK OF FUMAN CHU, Sheldon Leonard, Marc Lawrence, GODZILLA, THE X-FILES, Nicholas Lea, THE RELIC, Christopher Lee, Abbott and Costello Meet the Killers, CHINATOWN music, NIGHT STALKER, The Children of Kong, Horror Stamps, and more!



#25: Patricia Neal, Billy Gray, Robert Wise, DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, BATMAN AND ROBIN, FLASH GORDON, Johnny Duncan, FLESH! GORDON, MORE TALES OF THE CITY, THE SPACE CHILDREN, Joel Schumacher, The Fantasy World of MGM Musicals, and more!



#26: Roddy McDowall, David Manners, Stephen Geoffreys, FRIGHT NIGHT, LIZARD'S LEG AND OWLET'S WING, Christopher Bram, MORE TALES OF THE CITY, DRACULA AND FRANKENSTEIN, THE SAINT, Sherlock Holmes on Radio, THE X-FILES, and more!



#27: Fay Wray, Robert Wise, THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME, CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE, TITANIC, The Disney Music Vault, TITANIC, DRACULA and FRANKENSTEIN, Sherlock Holmes meets the Invisible Man, Forry Ackerman, THE MASK OF MORIARTY, and more!



#28: Gloria Stuart, VAMPIRE CIRCUS, TITANIC, Adrienne Corni, Ian Richardson, CHARLIE CHAN, Keya Luke, SOMEWHERE IN TIME, The Films of Robert S. Baker and Monty Berman, THE X-FILES, Warner Oland: Master of Menace, Hercules Unleashed, Tarzan, and more!



#29: Robert Wise, Audrey Totter, Lawrence Tierney, Dark Passages: The World of Film Noir, MORE TALES OF THE CITY, Ian Richardson, NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY, Godzilla Sings, Ross MacDonald's Lew Archer mysteries, Michael Tierney, Forry Ackerman, and more!



#30: Clive Barker, Bill Condon, GODS AND MONSTERS, Happy Birthday Zacherley, BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, Lost Basil Rathbone Interview, The Life of Ernest Thesiger, BODY HEAT, Curtis Harrington remembers James Whale, Arthur Dignam as Ernest Thesiger, and more!



#31: NIGHTMARE ALLEY, Coleen Gray, NIAGARA, David Manners, Warner Bros. Film Music, Basil Rathbone, Hitchcock Remakes, Dark Passages: The World of Film Noir, NIGHT OF THE HUNTER musical, Basil Rathbone on PERSON TO PERSON, Hammer Horror Scores, and more!



#32: DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY, Sir Ian McKellen, The Life and Times of Mitchell Leisen, Paramount Horrors, APT PUPIL, ALICE IN WONDERLAND, PETER PAN, Superman Music, X-FILES, The Zacherley Archives, THE LOUGER, LOUITA, MEET JOE BLACK, and more!



#33: Nina Foch, CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF, WEREWOLF OF LONDON, THE MUMMY, Disney's TARZAN, RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE, PLANET OF THE APES, Forry Ackerman, Jeff Rovin, The Werewolf in Fiction, BBC writer Bert Coules, CRY OF THE WEREWOLF, and more!



#34: Elena Verdugo, Jane Adams, HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN Versus HOUSE OF DRACULA, More Film Noir Classics, THE TWILIGHT ZONE, GODS AND MONSTERS, The Diary of Jack the Ripper, Bert Coules, The Terrible Teens: Teen Horror Comedies, and more!



#35: Francis Lederer, Ray Stricklyn, Norma Eberhardt, THE RETURN OF DRACULA, THE MUMMY, FRANKENSTEIN, THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY, SLEEPY HOLLOW, Stanley Bergerman: The Man Behind The Mummy, I WOKE UP EARLY THE DAY I DIED, and more!



#36: Phyllis Kirk, Paul Picerni, HOUSE OF WAX, Victoria Price, BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, Monster Music, GODS AND MONSTERS, Forry Ackerman, Putting on the Dog: The Thin Man on TV, THE MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM, TERROR IN THE WAX MUSEUM, and more!



#37: I MARRIED A WITCH, BELL BOOK AND CANDLE, Kathleen Freeman, TOPPER RETURNS, BEWITCHED, Godzilla on DVD, Paramount Horrors, REAR WINDOW's music, Host to Said Ghosts: The Thorne Smith Story, The Death of Dr. Cyclops, Ed Wood's novels, and more!



#38: Anne Jeffreys, Robert Sterling, Kasey Rogers, Kathleen Freeman, Paramount Horrors, NOSFERATU on Stage, DRACULA on DVD, THE AVENGERS, TOPPER, PERRY MASON, THE DARK ORIGINS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, Val Lewton music, and more!



#39: Curt Siodmak, Gene Evans, John Agar, DONOVAN'S BRAIN, BRAIN FROM PLANET AROUS, THE X-FILES, SHADOW OF FU MANCHU, Ygor: Horror's Cock-eyed Optimist, Forry Ackerman, THE LADY AND THE MONSTER, and more!



#40: Matt Frewer, Vincent Sherman, THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X, THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN, Dark Passages: The World of Film Noir, POIROT, SCREAM, James Bond, and more!



#41: Hurd Hatfield, Helmut Berger, Curt Siodmak, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, Horror Italian Style: Mario Bava on DVD, BEACH PARTY, THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS, Empire of the Imagination: She, Forry Ackerman, and more!



#42: Shane Briant, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, Ursula Andress, SHE, Curtis Harrington, Robert Tinnell, Crosby, Hope, and Lamour: The Road Pictures, Elizabeth Shepherd, David Peel as Dorian Gray, USHER, Zacherley, and more!



#43: THE BLACK ROOM, NIGHT OF TERROR, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, SHE, Dick Smith's Dorian Gray makeup, Universal Horrors on DVD, Marilyn Monroe Diamond Collection, Erotic Thrillers, THE MENACE, Columbia Horrors, and more!



#44: Christopher Lee, Harry Alan Towers, THE FACE OF FU MANCHU, SHE, Lurking Upon the Rooftops: Fantomas, Gunfight at the DVD Corral, Rector Rack, HORATIO HORNBLOWER, Don Dohler, The Many Faces of Christopher Lee, and more!





#45: NERO WOLFE, Christopher Lee, Maury Chaykin, Harry Alan Towers, Pulp Fiction, Tom Hutton, BRIDES OF FU MANCHU, Bruce Kimmel, THE FIRST NUDE MUSICAL, THE ADVENTURES OF ELERY QUEEN, Dr. Mabuse on DVD, The Night Stalker comic, and more!



#46: Julie Adams, Ricou Browning, Lori Nelson, Ben Chapman, John Bromfield, Tom Hennessey, Brett Halsey, CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON, David J. Skal, Ted A. Boius, David Drake, NERO WOLFE, CASE OF THE WHITECHAPEL VAMPIRE, and more!



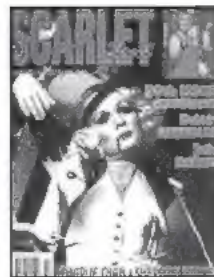
#47: Evelyn Keyes, Ann Rutherford, Columbia Horrors, The Creature's Gene Pool, Julie Adams, Ricou Browning, Lori Nelson, Ben Chapman, Tom Hennessey, FRANKENSTEIN on Stage, Forrest J Ackerman's Crimson Chronicles, Disney's Unburied Treasures, and more!



#48: David Hedison, Brett Halsey, David Frankham, THE FLY, Ann Rutherford, Charles Edward Pogue, WHISTLING IN THE DARK, Ricou Browning, Tom Hennessey, Forry Ackerman, The Comic Book Creature, Classic Musicals on DVD, Television Detectives, and more!



#49: Music to Die For: Jeepers Creepers, Muscling in on the Movies, Gordon Scott, Mark Forest, Reg Lewis, Attack of the Horror Hags, Charles Edward Pogue, Anthony Perkins Sings, Screamer: Cute Guys in Their Underpants Drop Dead, Friends of a Feather on DVD, and more!



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## SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 4

that time. So, I'm not sure whether this really qualifies as a "cameo," or they just picked a good actor for the small part and it worked.

Both Monk (the catcher in IT HAPPENS) and Guffy (the manager in ANGELS) strongly suggest Yogi Berra in personality. That makes more sense, in that Yogi broke in in 1947 as a World Series hero, had good years in '48 and '49, and would be Most Valuable Player by 1950.

All this makes me think you could do a sports-themed issue of *Scarlet Street* one day.

In noting Orangey's human-equivalent age in my article (OF RHUBARBS AND ORANGES), I fell back upon the old seven-for-one rule, as most of the people quoted within seemed to have done. This rule-of-thumb scale was actually devised for dogs. (Wait a moment, dogs don't have thumbs—or scales!) I am told that it doesn't quite work even with those beasts. I did find several other conversion formulas that, while not so easy to figure, are supposedly more meaningful. These scales take into account that a feline year is roughly equivalent to four human years, but only after the first two years of the cat's life. Those first two years are equivalent to something like 24 human years. Anyway, the Purina peo-

ple agree, and who am I to say them neigh—uh, nay? I have no desire to eat crow. Algebraically, it would be expressed as  $A_H = (4 \times A_C) + 14$ , where  $A_H$  is human age and  $A_C$  is cat age.

Assuming that Orangey was whelped in 1946, we can not only estimate a human-equivalent age for him, but also select a comparably aged human personality for the contemporary year of production (more or less), and find a modern person of similar venerability in 2006.

Don Mankowski  
Merritt Island, FL

The latest issue (*Scarlet Street* #54) is terrific. I particularly enjoyed the Simone Simon article by Roy Frumkes.

Last week in Hollywood I attended the 85th birthday party of Noel Neill of Superman fame. Quite an event! Nothing like being a Baby Boomer, looking around the table and seeing Jon Provost, Tony Dow, and Yvonne "Batgirl" Craig. Talk about surreal!

Bruce Dettman  
San Francisco, CA

Well, I'm in Borders and I see that the new *Scarlet Street* (#54) is out. So, I begin reading and wind up bringing it home with me. It was a cheap date—and yes, I paid for it.

I thought the Simone Simon article in particular was great, and a very nice one up on Warners' and their stupid de-

cision not to use any of Roy Frumke's interview material. Maroons.

I still very much like how *Scarlet Street* is put together. Nice, glossy paper, very easy to read layout. Articles that are serious in their information, yet have just enough humor so things don't get too dry. And Forry's column is always wonderful to read. It brings back more than a few fandom memories for me. Excellent group picture of the gang, but I was kinda surprised to see Richard Valley way in the back, barely noticeable. Ah, well—it's a nice photo, all the same.

*Scarlet Street* is a great magazine. I did something I used to with some of my favorite genre magazines. I noticed that the magazine was buried amongst a sea of others, so I took *Scarlet Street* and put them up front, right over a *US* magazine. I figured that maybe if those few issues sold, then *Scarlet Street* may have a chance of surviving.

Domenick Fraumeni  
Address Withheld

Never fear. Like Gloria Gaynor, we will survive.

I have been a subscriber to *Scarlet Street* for many years and I think you put out one of the best magazines dealing with vintage and modern cinema. Keep up the great work! All the best!

Brian O'Connor  
Brattleboro, VT

"...mesmerizing"- Film Threat

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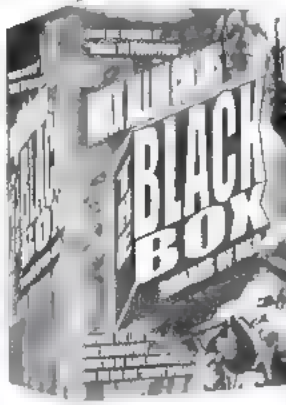
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**BORDERS.**

Here's a little anecdote that may please the Scarlet Street Forums community administrator. My partner Gary, pursuing his ambition of a singing career, is currently working with a vocal coach named Richard—a very experienced and talented guy who has retired to the mountains and so lives locally with his partner of 41 years. Bill (that's Richard's partner) is celebrating his 80th birthday this Friday, but despite the passing of years he is full of enthusiasm and *joi de vivre*, a charming man. Bill took me through his extensive collection of DVDs, Super 8 movies, lobby cards, etc., most of which were either sourced from the US at considerable expense or acquired there on holidays. He's also a mad fan of Sherlock Holmes and, when I told him I still hadn't seen an episode of the Granada series, he insisted on playing one then and there—after which he pulled out from the shelf his copy of the second MPI box set of Rathbone movies and started telling me all about it. Bill's one of these guys who talks a mile a minute—even at 80!—so although I tried to tell him I already had the set, it didn't quite sink in. Then, quite without any prompting from me, he said, "And these production notes! Fabulous! And they're so comprehensive—the guy who wrote these, I'm just astounded by his breadth of knowledge, and the anecdotal information he's brought in..."

Well, of course, this gave me the ideal moment to name drop that I was acquainted with the guy in question, and to tell Bill all about *Scarlet Street*

When I told him it was a mag about such subjects as Sherlock Holmes, old Broadway shows, classic movies, and so on, and had been taken to task for having "a gay agenda," he gave me the distinct impression it would be a must-read!

Al Paige  
Blackheath, Australia

*Scarlet Street* #54 is a great, fantastic issue! I read several sections in bed last night; particularly enjoyed the always-fascinating Forry's *CRIMSON CHRONICLES*. It's so nice that FJA is still surrounded by old friends like Harryhausen and Bradbury, as well as being overwhelmed with the affections of subsequent generations he helped to inspire!

Some nice surprises in this issue; I had never seen that half-sheet for the unfiled Lewton project *THEY CREEP BY NIGHT*. I have to wonder how this monster mash would have turned out—in throwing together Cat People, Leopard Men, vampires, zombies, and werewolves, it sounds as though RKO was imitating the most vaudevillian aspects of forties Universal.

Earl Roesel  
Newport, KY

The "BrainyHistory.com" website lists this entry for Tuesday, February 16, 1965. "Baker Street" opens at Broadway Theater New York City for 313 performances. Seeing *BAKER STREET* on Monday, August 9, 1965, remains one of the greatest thrills of my life—the first professional theatrical performance I'd ever attended. And though I've since

seen many dozens more, the Musical Adventure of Sherlock Holmes is the show closest to my heart.

At the time I was 13 years old, on a two-day vacation (from Boston) with my family. Tuesday we devoted to the World's Fair, but my experience of the Monday-evening performance overshadowed all else. Walter Kerr had it right when we likened the show to "three World's Fairs rolled into one." (The actual World's Fair, on the other hand, was barely like one World's Fair rolled into one.)

As Sherlock Holmes, Fritz Weaver steered the show with great skill, earning every cent of his salary. Inga Swenson (Irene Adler) was charismatic. The settings by Oliver Smith were splendid, as were the costumes by Motley. (It wasn't until reading John Gielgud's memoirs that I learned how important Motley is for the history of theatrical costuming, on both sides of the Atlantic.)

Ethan Mordden puts it well in his book *Open a New Window*: "Its energy lay in plot and pacing and the eye-filling designs; and one could not ask for more faithful impersonations than those of Weaver and [Martin] Gabel, not to mention la Swenson." (Thayer David had taken over from Gabel as Moriarty when I saw the show.) Mordden goes on to ask, "Why didn't it run on sheer theatricality?" His answer is that audiences in the 1960s were too highly focused on the megahits, ignoring lesser Broadway offerings. He also thinks that

Continued on page 14



# Frankly Scarlet

My friend and colleague, Dick Klemensen, who has published and edited *Little Shoppe of Horrors* magazine for, I believe, several centuries, dared to suggest, in a recent post on the Scarlet Street Message Boards, that *Scarlet Street* #54 contained entirely too many photographs of yours truly, Ye Redditor. This, mind you, from a crazed egomaniac whose own autobiographical ramblings rival those of David Copperfield—though Dick, at least, refrained from beginning his discourse with the legend “I am born,” leaving us to take that fact for granted.

Awright, awright—I’m only pulling Dick’s leg. One of the most charming aspects of *Little Shoppe* is catching up with what’s been happening in its publisher’s life—a life that, heaven knows, is fraught with incident. And we have been running quite a few pix of moi and my partner in crime, Tom Amorosi, in recent issues. There’s a good reason for that, though.

We’ve been gettin’ around. Well, for instance.

In November 2005, Tom and I once again hopped a train from Manhattan’s Penn Station to Chicago, where we celebrated Tom’s 40-something birthday with a scrumptious lunch and several varieties of vodka at Russian Tea Time, one of our favorite restaurants. From Chicago we continued to Horrorwood, Karloffornia, to celebrate yet another birthday—that of a venerable gent named (horre!) Ackerman—who tried to convince us that he was shortly to become 89 years old. We didn’t believe a word of it; obviously, he’d only recently graduated from short pants to “grown-up” duds.



Prior to the natal festivities, we paid a visit to a deliciously horrifying store called Dark Delicacies, where I signed copies of my Koschaker *The Night Stalker* chronicles story “Shadows from the Screen” accompanied by original NIGHT STALKER stars (and good, good friends) Jack Grinnage and Carol Ann Susi. (That’s us sitting at a table in the TOP RIGHT photo being paid a visit by TRAIL OF THE SCREAMING FOREHEAD star Dan Roebuck.) We also partied with our usual suspects, including kind, dear sweet wonderful Joe Mico, Alan Skinner (who took us to the Magic Castle a burlesque show, and the Queen Mary), Bruce Kimmel, Charles Edward Pogue, Jack Morrissey, John Coff, Scarlet artist Bill Chancellor, Al (Aussie Boy) Paige, John Stoskopf, Terry Pace, and others too numerous (and humorous) to mention.

Come the great day in the morning, Tom and I presented Uncle Terry with a really B.L.G. gift—B.L.G. as in Bert L. Gordon—who, coincidentally, is interviewed on page 32 of this very issue of *Scarlet Street*. With a little doctoring by Tom, a one-sheet poster for Bert’s WAR OF THE COLOSSAL BLAST was transformed into WAR OF THE ACKERBEAST. As you can see from the photo BOY TOM LEFT, the lowering Terror from Hell himself was flabbergasted. In fact, he hadn’t a single flabber that hadn’t been gast.

The celebration included a showing of excerpts from a swell new DVD entitled THE SCREE BOYS. You’ll learn more about in Terry’s column on page 17 and in the article on page 52. Suffice to say that *Scarlet Street* recommends it without reservation. Don’t miss it!

As usual, Terry’s birthday bash was packed to the rafters, but we managed some quality time with Curtis (WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH HELFN?) Harrington and a few other friends, and got to pose with Terry and an old chum of his named—oh, what was it?—Ray Bradbury. Yeah, that’s right: Ray Bradbury. (I’m now the proud owner of a signed copy of *Jahneheit* 151.)

By the time this issue hits the stands, we’ll be but half a year away from Terry’s next birthday chances are you’ll be reading about in *Scarlet Street*.

In March of this year the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences forever shamed itself by denying the groundbreaking gay film BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN the Oscar for Best Picture.



It wasn’t because the film was about gay men. It was because the film was about gay men who live their lives as one Great Big Lie.

There are those who argue that BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN isn’t at all groundbreaking, that it doesn’t mark a major turning point in gay cinema. In an online article at [www.truthdig.com](http://www.truthdig.com), writer Larry Gross trots out a long list of previous “groundbreaking gay films”—almost every one of them featuring homosexual characters who don’t survive till the final fadeout. What he fails to do is point out that those long-gone movie gays all die because they realize they’re gay and can’t live with it, or because being gay compels them to act out in a manner that causes their deaths.

That’s not the case with BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN, and that’s why those critics who have called the film a turning point are entirely correct. BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN condemns not the homosexual but the closet. It does so in no uncertain terms. That’s a turning point. That’s revolutionary.

And that’s what scared the shit out of a deeply closeted Hollywood.

Richard Valley

P.S. Could the homophobic powers that-be possibly squeeze any more pictures of Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) kissing their wives onto the BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN’s DVD displays? It’s cheesy, it’s misleading, and it’s completely, predictably hypocritical. There’s no reasonable reason for it and absolutely no excuse.



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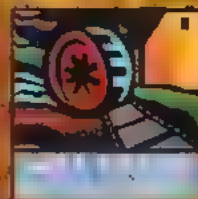
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### SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 11

the score, even if "valid, lively, and correct," was not sufficiently strong (yet he also acknowledges that BAKER STREET was not the kind of show that needed a strong score)

To my ear the music is still quite good. The absence of a finale does seem odd when listening to the cast album, but didn't present a problem in production, where the conclusion was satisfying, surprising, and "right." The bigger question for me is why the score offers no centrally located Big Production Number that might have assured a longer run. Neither Irene nor (of course) Holmes had a then-fashionable, 7,000-megawatt, sixties style central "title song" (à la Jerry Herman) around which the show could pivot—like the worshipful extravaganza bestowed on Dolly halfway through her show, or the one that Mame would soon be enjoying.

In another, more razzle-dazzle musical, "What a Night This Is Going to Be" might have been transformed into a "powerhouse pivot" near the halfway point. Happily, though, the delightful number we do have is too intimate for that purpose. And the carousing in "Jewelry" was also true to the show's comparatively modest scale. How could it—or any of the numbers, for that matter—compete with, say, Dolly descending her staircase? BAKER STREET was gentle and comfortable, rather like a bed time story. It was formulaic but openly and transparently so, having fun with the detective-story conventions.

On learning that one of the ungenerous "bonus" CD tracks was "Baker Street Mystery," I winced. It's been years (sans turntable) since I've heard my HIT SONGS FROM BAKER STREET cover album, but my painful memory is that the only thing good about "Baker Street Mystery" was its merciful brevity. Kai Winding's arrangement made as little sense as its meaningless title. My favorite BAKER STREET cover is Richard Hayman's orchestral arrangement (with chorus) of "Finding Words for Spring," but the only place I've ever found it is on the "B" side of Richard Burton's "A Married Man" single.

Joe Crawford  
Boston, MA

Richard Valley's article on the VAL LEWTON COLLECTION (SS #54) struck a nerve with me (but a good one). I have to admit that, even though I've watched three of the five DVDs, I have yet to listen to a single commentary all the way through.

Commentaries when they are done well are an excellent extra. My problem is choosing whether to watch another unrelated movie or to watch/listen to the commentary. Personally I can't do something else such as read a book while a commentary is running. If the commentary is engaging, then I find myself watching the screen again. If the commentary is dull or heavy with silent lapses, then irritation creeps in and I ask myself why is this even on?

I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE is my all-time favorite film, yet I could only

last 20 minutes into the commentary. The two gentlemen know their facts and the discussion is lively, but instead of listening to what they were saying my attention was drawn to how much one would speak over the other and whether the other gent would get a word in edgewise.

Gary Banks  
Cullman, AL

Jack Randall Earles' review of 20th Century Fox's THREE COINS IN THE FOUNTAIN (*Scarlet Street* #54), was a thought-provoking piece of film criticism.

Jean Negulesco's THREE COINS IN THE FOUNTAIN was a crowd-pleasing film from 1954 that starred two young actresses whose film careers came to a very abrupt end: Jean Peters and Maggie McNamara.

Jean Peters had a very successful career that began at the age of 21 with Henry King's CAPTAIN FROM CASTILE and included such well known films as Elia Kazan's VIVA ZAPATA!, Henry Hathaway's NIAGARA, Samuel Fuller's PICKUP ON SOUTH STREET, and Robert Aldrich's APACHE. She retired from the screen at the age of 29 with the very popular 1955 film A MAN CALLED PETER. Of course, her involvement with the eccentric Howard Hughes, whom she eventually married and then later divorced, might've had something to do with it: he was a very manipulative and controlling individual. Looking back on that marriage (and years-long courtship), Peters did not have very kind words for Hughes. She believed



that she had been dealing with a sociopath for 20 years of her life.

Maggie McNamara also had a high-profile career. She replaced Barbara Bel Geddes in the stage production of *THE MOON IS BLUE* and later starred in Otto Preminger's "scandalous" 1953 film version. Then, still in her twenties, she won one of the starring roles in *THREE COINS IN THE FOUNTAIN* and was placed opposite Richard Burton in Philip Dunne's prestigious film *PRINCE OF PLAYERS*. She also achieved a high-profile marriage in Hollywood, to director David Swift. But something went tragically wrong with her life and career. (Supposedly, she had a life-long battle with mental instability.) Although she later acted on Broadway in *STEP ON A CRACK* and had a small role in Preminger's *THE CARDINAL*, she wound up working as a typist in an advertising agency and committing suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills at the age of 50.

*THREE COINS IN THE FOUNTAIN* was written by a successful playwright, John Patrick, who had already won the Pulitzer Prize for his hit Broadway comedy *THE TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON*. Patrick was a gay man who lived openly with his partner for almost 50 years. While he was working in Hol-

lywood, he was very much a part of the Christopher Isherwood/Don Bachardy set. It's very interesting—and illuminating, too—that such vibrantly heterosexual films as *FOUNTAIN*, *LOVE IS A MANY-SPLENDORED THING*, *HIGH SOCIETY*, *LES GIRLS*, *SOME CAME RUNNING*, and *THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG* were actually written/adapted by a gay man. Of course, you can argue gay subtext in some of these films—especially *LOVE* and *SUZIE WONG* with their tortured tales of a forbidden love frowned upon by "respectable society"—but Patrick simply seemed to have an affinity for writing about young women whose love lives were not very reflective of the conventional norm.

Earles is very perceptive with his observation that Fox had a preference for the "three girls looking for romance" film. As Rona Jaffe tells it, her book *The Best of Everything* might not have materialized without the help of one of that studio's producers: Jerry Wald. She had met Wald in the office of Simon and Schuster's editor-in-chief, Jack Goodman, who told Wald that Jaffe was "going to write a hell of a novel some day." Wald confided in her that he was looking for a modern-day *Kitty Foyle*—a working girl in New York kind of book. Jaffe went to her local library

got the Christopher Morley book, read it, and concluded that Morley didn't know anything about women. Later, vacationing in Hollywood and lunching with Wald, she told him that she was going to "write that working-girl book." She returned to New York and set pen to paper. She was told by Simon and Schuster's new editor-in-chief, Robert Gottlieb, "to look back in horror and write," and Wald initiated a widespread nationwide publicity campaign for the new book. Jaffe was certainly pushed into working diligently and obsessively every day for five months and five days and finally delivered a 775-page manuscript. A year later, in 1959, Jerry Wald had that huge bestseller up there on the CinemaScope screen in Color by Deluxe.

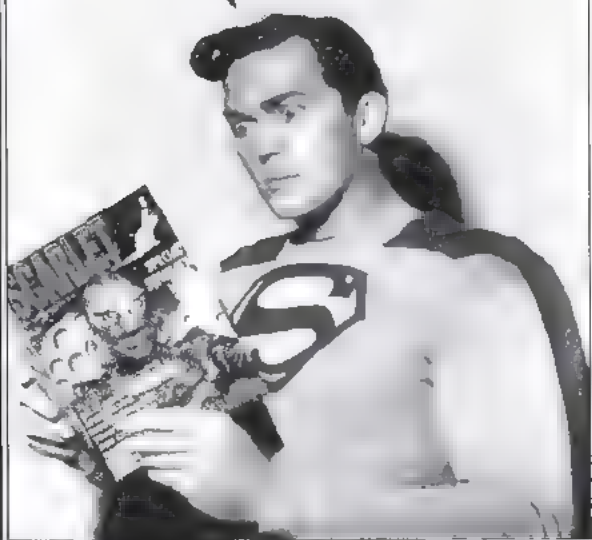
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# Lugosi's Dracula Cape Revealed



by Cortlandt Hull

**A**BBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN (1948) is one of those films enjoyed by horror fans of all ages. A perfect blend of classic horror and the comedy of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, the film is timeless.

Many fans believe Bela Lugosi gave one of his finest performances ever as Count Dracula. It's a pivotal role that drives the film's plot. No other actor used a cape as a focal point for a characterization, and Lugosi's cape for this film was probably his most impressive. It measures 28 feet in circumference, tapered in the front, forming a full

circle when unfurled, and with scallops (or points) cut like bat wings.

Oddly, it was Lugosi's least favorite cape. He much preferred a flat, velvety black material for the back, unlike the shiny satin quality of the A & C MFET garment. However, the satin was necessary to help animator's visualize Dracula's transformation into a bat.

This piece of movie history has seldom been seen by the public since the film was or-

iginally released. Recently, while filming an interview for the DVD documentary THE WITCH'S DUNGEON: 40 YEARS OF CHILLS (see this issue's NEWS HOUND), film historian and collector Todd Feiertag allowed the Lugosi cape to be photographed and shared with fans. Exclusively for *Scarlet Street*, it's displayed on this page on the life-size figure of Lugosi from The Witch's Dungeon museum.

Feiertag explained the cape's history. "It was created by Western Costume, completely made of satin, commissioned by Universal International specifically for Lugosi to wear in the films. The inner lining was a gold/salmon color. The common perception is that Dracula's cape has a blood red lining, as pictured in most posters. However, due to the technical characteristics of black-and-white photography, a red lining would have appeared almost black on film and both sides of the cape would have appeared identical. Again, a difference was needed to assist animators in the man-to-bat transformation sequences.

In 1964, actor and collector John Andrews acquired the cape from Western Costume. Andrews, while appearing in Ed Wood's ORGY OF THE DEAD (1965), allowed Criswell to wear the famous cloak. (Just a few years prior to this, it may have been worn by actor/impressionist Gabriel Dell as Dracula in an elaborate skit on THE STEVE ALLEN SHOW.)

*Continued on page 82*



**TOP:** The Dracula cape from ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN (1948) as worn by the Bela Lugosi figure at the Witch's Dungeon. **LEFT:** Todd Feiertag and Friend.





For those of you in attendance at my last birthday in November 2005, you may remember the DVD clips from the new documentary *THE SCI-FI BOYS*, which were shown during the party. Paul Davids has done a beautiful job of producing and directing this fond tribute to me, Ray Harryhausen, Ray Bradbury and other notables of Science Fiction. The DVD is now available and I hope you'll all rush out and get a copy for yourselves. I couldn't be happier about this nostalgic look back to the good ol' days of early Sci-Fi, Fantasy, & Horror. There's a lot in this documentary about the influence of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine on generations of kids too. Peter Jackson narrates the project and many of my famous friends make appearances. I understand that the fun "extras" included on this DVD are the length of the documentary itself!

Speaking of Paul Davids, his lovely wife Hollace was kind enough to invite me and 200 friends to the LA premiere of Peter Jackson's new *KING KONG*. I'd already seen a press screening earlier, but what a thrill to treat my friends to a deluxe screening at Universal Studios. I watched the movie sitting next to my old pal Ray Bradbury, who was absolutely bowled over by this Kong. Ray remarked afterwards: "This is a perfect movie! Peter Jackson has proved his love tonight!" Ray also mentioned that he'd love for Peter to direct *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES*. Pretty high praise! In attendance were Brinke Stevens, Brad Linaweaver, Mike and Alta Hamm, Lydia van vogt, Ogre of the industrial band Skinny Puppy, and many other friends. As for me, while I found myself longing for the original Kong all thru my first viewing, this second time,

I warmed up to the great ape. As always, I tried to include a few of the younger generation of fans in the screening. Watching their astonished faces as they left the theater was like being in a time machine and recalling the first time I met King Kong on a movie screen. Particularly thrilled was my new 15-year-old friend Casey Wong and his family. Casey is a youngster who plans on becoming the next Dick Smith of movie makeup.

The night before the Golden Globe Awards, Universal Studios threw a gigantic, 1000 person banquet at Wolfgang Puck's Spago restaurant, known as the dining place of the stars in Beverly Hills, and I was thrilled to be included as a guest. At my table were Rick Baker "Monster Maker," whom we have seen receive many Oscars for his

*Continued on page 82*

Basil Gogos, Rick Baker, Bob Burns, Paul Davids, Forry Ackerman, and Peter Jackson at the Universal Studios Focus Films Golden Globes party at Spago, in Beverly Hills. While Ang Lee is out of frame at the buffet and Terri Hatcher and Donald Sutherland schmooze off camera, these guys sampled Wolfgang Puck's best and talked monster!





# the NEWS HOUND



Your hungry Hound looks into the cauldron to see what's simmering for the summer season and beyond...

## Theatrical Thrills

Call your psychiatrist—Tom Cruise is back to drive moviegoers nuts (in a good way, of course) in Paramount's **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III**, now playing. Cruise allegedly performs most of his own stunts, guided by debuting feature director J. J. Abrams. Ving Rhames returns to cruise with Tom, joining them are Laurence Fishburne and Philip Seymour Hoffman.

Tom Hanks and AMELIE's Audrey Tatou star in a Louvre story like no other—**THE DA VINCI CODE** (Sony Pictures), director Ron Howard's hotly anticipated film of Dan Brown's 2003 best-seller about murder, cryptography, and religious conspiracy.

Marvel's mutants hit the movie screens a third time in **X-MEN: THE LAST STAND** (Fox) from director Brett Ratner (**RED DRAGON**). The titanic team must take a stand against one of their own—Jean Gray (Famke Janssen), who morphs into the dangerous Dark Phoenix.

Don't look now! Donald Sutherland and family are plagued by an extremely nasty ghost in **AN AMERICAN HAUNTING** (Freestyle Releasing), a docu horror movie based on actual events. Sissy Spacek and 16-year-old Londoner Rachel Hurd-Wood costar.

Director Wolfgang Petersen (**THE PERFECT STORM**) returns to the ocean waves to remake the damp disaster adventure **POSEIDON** (Warner Bros.). Kurt Russell, Richard Dreyfuss, and Andre Braugher are part of the upside-down ensemble.

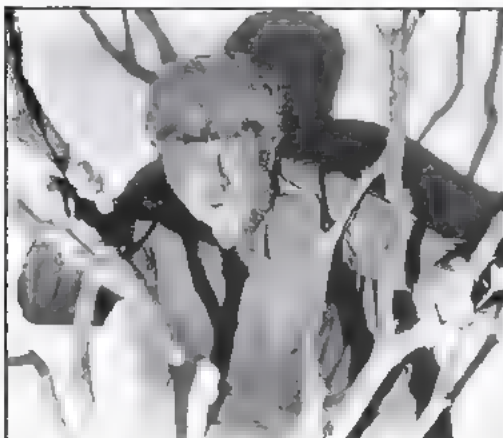
In June, the Man of Steel leaps back onto the big screen in Warner Bros.' **SUPERMAN RETURNS**, starring Brandon Routh, Kevin Spacey—and the late Marlon Brando, courtesy of clips from the **SUPERMAN** flicks from the eighties. Director Bryan Singer hopefully brings along the top-notch comic-book chops he showed in **X-MEN** and **X-2**.

Child rearing has its tribulations for young marrieds Liev Schreiber and Julia Styles, particularly when their young son's "terrible twos" turn into "666." Yes, it's Fox's spanking new remake of **THE OMEN**, fittingly scheduled for release on 6/6/06.

## Upcoming Attractions

Coming in July: Johnny Depp and the entire scurvy crew are back on board for Disney's **PIRATES OF THE CARIB-**

**BEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST**. **THE SIXTH SENSE**'s twisty tale teller M. Night Shyamalan lends a lighter hand to **LADY IN THE WATER** (Warner Bros.), a fable about a man and a mermaid starring **SIDEWAYS'** Paul Giamatti... Kristen Bell, the teen gunshoe of TV's **VERONICA MARS**, investigates an infernal computer virus in the J-Horror remake **PULSE** from Dimension Films... Producer Robert Zemeckis employs his **POLAR EXPRESS**-style digital animation on the kiddie horror tale **MONSTER HOUSE** (Sony)... Suave supercops Crockett and Tubbs move from TV Land to the silver screen in Universal's **MIAMI VICE**, from director Michael Mann... The works of two classic science fiction novelists hit the screen in July—Brian Aldiss' **BROTHERS OF THE HEAD**



**THE WOLF MAN (1941)** is going to be remade—hopefully not by anyone who had anything to do with **VAN HELSING (2004)**.

(IFC Films) and Philip K. Dick's **A SCANNER DARKLY** (Warner).

Headed for theaters in August: Nicole Kidman and future 007 Daniel Craig try to stop an alien invasion in Warner Bros.' **THE VISITING**, a variation on **INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS**... Samuel L. Jackson and Julianna Margulies are among the passengers on board a plane infested with poisonous snakes in a New Line thriller titled (what else?) **SNAKES ON A PLANE**... Oliver Stone addresses the events of 9/11 in **WORLD TRADE CENTER** (Paramount), starring Nicolas Cage and Maria Bello.

## Breaking News from The Daily Planet

Steel yourselves for a stack of super-goodies to tie in with the June release of **SUPERMAN RETURNS**. In addition to the expected lunch boxes, bedsheets, and Underoos, a 14-disc **ULTIMATE SUPERMAN** boxed DVD set is due for re-

lease later this year from Warner Home Video. Included with the new 2006 feature are restored versions of **SUPERMAN**, **SUPERMAN II**, **SUPERMAN III**, and **SUPERMAN IV: THE QUEST FOR PEACE**. Of particular interest is the restoration of sacked director Richard Donner's version of **SUPERMAN II**; restored footage includes additional scenes featuring Marlon Brando as Superman's father Jor-El.

Also due this year (available separately) is a new edition of **SUPERGIRL**, plus the long awaited release of the Kirk Alyn serials **SUPERMAN** and **ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN**. The late Lyle Talbot, who played Lex Luthor in the latter, appears in this issue of *Scarlet Street* in a never-before-published interview by David Del Valle. (See page 56.)

Meanwhile, plans are already on the speeding-bullet track for the next **SUPERMAN** theatrical feature, which Bryan Singer may tackle after his remake of **LOGAN'S RUN** shoots in the fall.

## Déjà Views

**THE WOLF MAN** howls again in a big-screen remake of the 1941 classic from Universal. **TRAFFIC** Oscar-winner Benicio Del Toro stars and coproduces a return to the classic movie monsters that hopefully won't walk the same thorny path as **VAN HELSING**. Shooting (with silver bullets, naturally) begins in 2007 with release of the beast set for 2008.

Christian Bale dons the basic-black Kevlar again in a sequel to 2005's **BATMAN BEGINS**. Christopher Nolan is likely to return to the director's chair, with brother Jonathan Nolan scripting. Look for the next Bat-installment to feature villains The Joker, Two-Face, and (possibly) The Penguin.

Has Steven Spielberg made it his mission to remake all the sci-fi films of 1951? **WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE** is now on the drawing board with Paramount, following last year's **WAR OF THE WORLDS**. Can new versions of **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** and **THE THING** be far behind? (Presumably, **SUPERMAN** and **THE MOLE MEN** will be skipped.)

**NANCY DREW** returns to the big screen, courtesy of Warner Bros.—the same studio that produced four fun B-pictures in the late 1930s that starred the bouncy Bonita Granville as Nancy and Frankie Thomas as boyfriend Ted Nickerson. The new **DREW** stars young

*Continued on page 20*





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# MAX, MICKEY, AND BLAKE IN A BOX

**M**ax is back, and he's brought Mickey and Blake along with him!

That's Max Allan Collins, of course, scripter of the *Dick Tracy* comic strip from 1977 to 1993; author of a sterling series of historical mysteries including *The Titanic Murders* (1999), *The Pearl Harbor Murders* (2001), and *The London Blitz Murders* (2004); writer, executive producer, and director of the suspense films *MOMMY* (1996) and *MOMMY'S DAY* (1997); contributor to the bestselling *Kolchak: The Night Stalker Chronicles* anthology (2005); and creator (with artist Richard Piers Rayner) of the graphic novel *Road to Perdition* (1998), which became a 2002 hit film with Tom Hanks and Paul Newman.

Mickey is none other than Mickey Spillane, creator of the hardest-boiled private eye who ever cracked a case or a skull: Mike Hammer. Mike made his literary debut in *I, the Jury* (1947); went on to appear in the sequels *My Gun is Quick* (1950); *Kiss Me, Deadly* (1952); and *The Twisted Thing* (1966); among others; and the films *KISS*

*ME DEADLY* (1955) and *I, THE JURY* (1982), among others. Spillane himself appeared in Collins' *MOMMY* and *MOMMY'S DAY*.

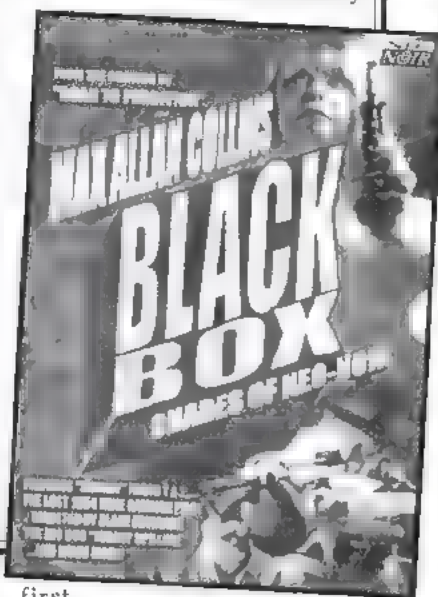
In addition to books and movies, Mike Hammer had a TV career, and that brings us to Blake Edwards, who wrote and directed the rare 1954 pilot episode for *MIKE HAMMER*, starring Brian Keith, before deciding to think pink with a series of comedies starring Peter Sellers as Inspector Jacques Clouseau.

Max, Mickey, and Blake are all present and accounted for in a new four-DVD crime collection called *MAX ALLAN COLLINS' BLACK BOX SHADES OF NEO-NOIR* (Neo Noir Entertainment, \$34.98).

The box is six hours plus of noir heaven and includes both *MOMMY* and *MOMMY'S DAY*, both starring Patty McCormack (who graduated in a natural progression from playing the Daughter from Hell in 1956's *THE BAD SEED* to playing the Mother from Hell in Max's movies). Also featured are Jason Miller, Gary Sandy, Shirley Eaton, and Brinke Stevens. The set also includes the *MIKE HAMMER* pilot, games, and

interviews with Stacey Keach (another TV Hammer), Leonard Maltin, Walter Mosley, Lawrence Block, Eaton, and Spillane. Mad Max himself acts as a tour guide and provides commentary throughout. Aim to get this one. It's aiming at you!

—Richard Valley



## NEWS HOUND

*Continued from page 18*

Emma Roberts of the popular Nickelodeon series *UNFABULOUS*

Thomas Harris, whose 1988 novel *Silence of the Lambs* was filmed to Oscar winning effect in 1991, is bringing back serial killer/gastronomic Hannibal Lecter in the new novel and screenplay, *Young Hannibal: Behind the Mask*. A late 2006 or early 2007 release is planned for both book and movie

Still more sequels due to threaten innocent theatergoers: *SAW 2*, *THE GRUDGE 2*, *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE: THE BEGINNING*, *ROCKY 6*, *THE SANTA CLAUSE 3*, *OCEAN'S THIRTEEN*, *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN*, and *RESIDENT EVIL AFTERLIFE*.

## Sybil Liberties

CBS has commissioned a new mini series based on *Sybil*, the 1973 book by Flora Rheta Schreiber about multiple-personality disorder. The 1976 NBC version starring Sally Field and Joanne Woodward—to be released in May in a 30th Anniversary DVD edition—will be tough to top. But CBS and Warner Bros. TV have hired some award-winning personalities for their new adaptation. Emmy-winner Tammy Blanchard (young Judy Garland in the 1999 telefilm *ME AND MY SHADOWS*) stars as Sybil, and Oscar-winner Jessica Lange takes Woodward's role of the psychiatrist Keeping it all together is multi-Emmy winning director Joseph Sargent.

## Guys and Daleks

Sci-Fi Channel has imported a brand-new incarnation of the British cult classic *DOCTOR WHO*, currently running on Friday nights. *WHO* returned to U.K. TV screens last year after a 15-year absence. Christopher Eccleston perhaps best known for portraying Nicole Kidman's creepy husband in *THE OTHERS*—stars in the 13-episode series. Although the show was picked up for a second season in the home country, Eccleston chose not to return as The Doctor. Replacing him is Scottish actor David Tennant, whose sci-fi creds include an historic live remake of *THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT* that was telecast on BBC Four last April.

## The Home Video Vault

In the cathode-ray catfight between Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, Miss Davis is the clear winner. Warner Home Video follows last summer's boxed set of Davis delights with *THE BETTE DAVIS COLLECTION, VOLUME 2* (\$59.92), arriving in late May. (A second Crawford compilation will follow, however.) Included in the new Davis dossier are newly restored and remastered versions of *JEZEBEL* and *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?*, the latter title a two-disc edition featuring a commentary by famed playwrights, performers, and cross-dressers Charles Busch and John "Lypsinka" Epperson. Rounding out the collection are the DVD debuts of *MARKED WOMAN* and *THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER*,

and the first home video appearance of *OLD ACQUAINTANCE*. (The titles are also available separately.) Warner is also at work restoring *ALL THIS AND HEAVEN TOO*, *THE CORN IS GREEN*, *DANGEROUS*, *IN THIS OUR LIFE*, and *WATCH ON THE RHINE* for future DVD collections. It's a veritable O. D. of B. D.

Other new releases of note: Bette Davis (her again!) makes a meal of the scenery as the monstrous matriarch of Hammer's *THE ANNIVERSARY* (Anchor Bay, \$14.98), writer/director/star Gene Wilder visits Baker Street in the irregular spoof *THE ADVENTURE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES' SMARTER BROTHER* (Fox, \$14.98), Bob Fosse showcases Liza Minnelli in the classic 1972 musical tele-special *LIZA WITH A 'Z'* (Showtime Entertainment, \$29.98); more musical memories are on view in MCM's two-disc edition of *GUYS AND DOLLS*.

*THE WITCH'S DUNGEON: 40 YEARS OF CHILLS* (Colorbox Studios, \$18.95) is not only a history of how this unique museum began in 1966 and how its exhibits were created, but covers all the elements that inspired it. As *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT* stated, "The Witch's Dungeon is the longest-running museum of its kind in the country." The attraction has become a tradition in Connecticut every fall for the past four decades. The Dungeon pays tribute to the stars and makeup artists who gave us such classic chillers as *DRACULA*, *WEREWOLF OF LONDON*,



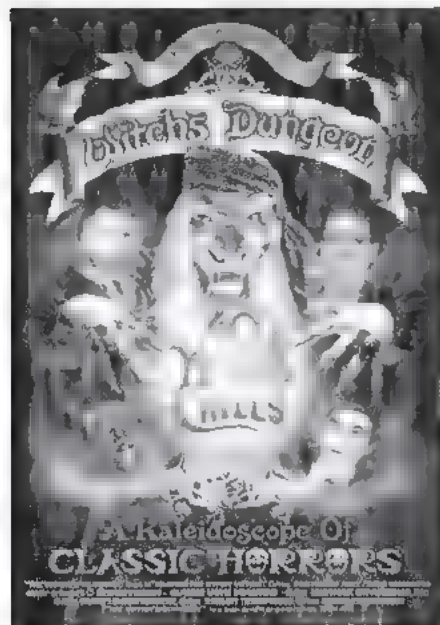
and **HOUSE OF WAX**. The DVD includes appearances by Mark Hamill, Christopher Lee, Sara Karloff, Bela Lugosi Jr., Ron Chaney, Cassandra (Elvira) Peterson, Ben Chapman, Ricou Browning, Bobby (Boris) Pickett, Bob Burns, June Foray, and many more. **THE WITCH'S DUNGEON** 40 YEARS OF CHILLS premieres at Showcase Cinemas in Southington, Connecticut, on September 15, 2006

#### DVD Boxes in Brief

Universal salutes three of Hollywood's most memorable actresses in a trio of boxed sets dubbed **THE GLAMOUR COLLECTION** (\$26.98 each). Marlene Dietrich positively dazzles in **MOROCCO**, **BLONDE VENUS**, **THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN**, **FLAME OF NEW ORLEANS**, and **GOLDEN EARRINGS**. Carole Lombard is luminous in **HANDS ACROSS THE TABLE**, **LOVE BEFORE BREAKFAST**, **MAN OF THE WORLD**, **THE PRINCESS COMES ACROSS**, **TRUE CONFESSION**, and **WE'RE NOT DRESSING**. And Mae West's bountiful charms are on display in **GO WEST YOUNG MAN**, **GOIN' TO TOWN**, **I'M NO ANGEL**, **MY LITTLE CHICKADEE**, and **NIGHT AFTER NIGHT**

Sony offers **THE CARY GRANT BOX SET** (\$49.95), a five-disc package comprised of **HOLIDAY**, **ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS**, **THE TALK OF THE TOWN**, **HIS GIRL FRIDAY**, and **THE AWFUL TRUTH**. Each disc includes featurettes and commentaries.

New TV series boxed sets, now in stores: **THE TIME TUNNEL: VOLUME 1** (Fox, \$39.98), features the first 15 episodes of the totally tubular 1966 Irwin Allen series; extras include vintage promos, effects tests, and the unaired pilot episode. . . . Fox offers season sets of **THE X FILES** in slimmer, repackaged and more affordable "collectors editions" (\$49.98 vs. \$99.98) . . . Paramount beams in with **STAR TREK: FAN COLLECTIVE—TIME TRAVEL** (\$39.98), a package of the top 10 fan-favorite time-tripping episodes from the first four **TREK** TV series.



Other vintage series newly available on silver disc: **LEAVE IT TO BEAVER**, **THE BIG VALLEY**, **GIDGET**, **THE FLYING NUN**, **THE FLASH**, and **I DREAM OF JEANNIE**.

\*\*\*

Gone, but never to be forgotten: writer/actor/comedian Richard Pryor; Fayard Nicholas of the tap-dancing Nicholas Brothers; **THIS IS YOUR LIFE** producer Ralph Edwards; broadcasters Reuven Frank and Michael Gill; Warner Bros. animator Norm McCabe; comic strip artists Eldon Dedini and Julian Blake; conductor/arranger Skitch Henderson; lounge singer Sonny King; recording artists Billy Cowtell, Barry Cowtell, Shirley Horn, Gene McFadden, Wilson Pickett, and Lou Rawls; songwriter Baker Knight, comedian Louis Nye; ecdysiast Candy Barr, Muppets writer/performer Jerry Juhl, columnist Jack Anderson; novelists Peter Benchley, John Fowles, Rona Jaffe, Robert Sheekley, David Westheimer, and Rodney "Trevarian" Whitaker; cinema author and historian John McCabe; playwrights Endesha Ida Mae Holland, Wendy Wasserstein, and August Wilson; animator Myron Waldman; film composer Akira Ifukube; veteran Hitchcock camera operator Leonard J. South; cinematographers Adrian Biddle and Guy Green; costume designer Moss Mabry; **STAR TREK** writer/producer Michael Piller; TV scripters Lesley Duxbury, Fred S. Fox, and Simon Mantner; screenwriters Marjorie Kellogg and Alfred Shaughnessy; producers Tony Adams, Moustapha Akkad, Dan Curtis, and Derek Lamb; directors Arthur Bloom, Charles Gormley, Wolf Rilla, and Herbert L. Strock; and actors Avril Angers, Ronnie Barker, Lloyd Bochner, Jocelyn Brando, Roger Brierley, Phil Brown, Argentina Brunetti, Craig "Mugsy" Calam, Jean Carson, Brendan Cauldwell, Jack Colvin, Franklin Cover, Patrick Cranshaw, Constance Cummings, Raul Dávila, Richard DeAngelis, Beach Dickerson, Steve Flanagan, Anthony Franciosa, Pedro Gonzales-Gonzales, Jan Holden, John Hollis, William Hootkins, Ursula Howells, Mary Jackson, Peter Juhl, Justine Johnston, Andreas Katsulas, Geoffrey Keen, Barbara Keogh, Don Knotts, John Larch, Marc Lawrence, Paula Lawrence, Al "Grandpa Munster" Lewis, Osa Massen, Darren McGavin, Henry McGee, Anne Meacham, Pat Morita, Sheree North, Jean Parker, Christopher Penn, Charles Rocket, Vincent Schiavelli, Mildred Shay, Moira Shearer, John Spencer, Wendie Jo Sperber, Don Stewart, Enzo Stuarti, Annette Vadim, Michael Vale, Rik Van Nutter, Frank Wilson, Mary Wimbush, **WIZARD OF OZ** winged monkey Sig Froelich, original **OUR GANG** members Tommy "Butch" Bond and Eugene "Porky" Lee, and **WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?** stars Dennis Weaver and Shelley Winters.



Send The Hound your questions, comments, and gypsy curses and compliments to [TheNewsHound@scarletstreet.com](mailto:TheNewsHound@scarletstreet.com)



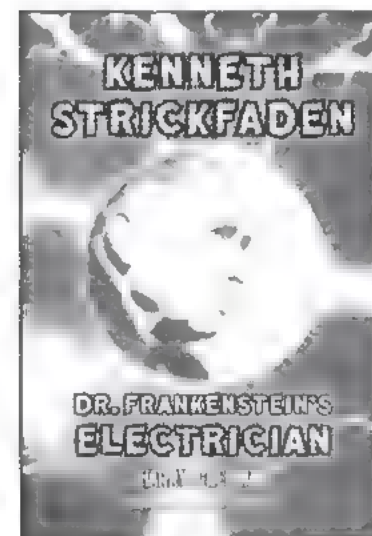
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# SCREEN...



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### Scarlet Street's DVD Reviews

#### THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

Paramount Home Video—\$14.99

Aliens nearly conquer the world before succumbing to earth's microbes in *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS* (1953), George Pal's 85-minute adaptation of Herbert George Wells's 1898 novel. Byron Haskin directs the Barré Lyndon screenplay, starring Gene Barry as Dr. Clayton Forrester and Ann Robinson as his love interest, Sylvia Van Buren. With the movie on Disk One and bonus features on Disk Two, Paramount's Special Collectors' Edition offers English or French Dolby Digital 2.0 mono audio, interactive menus, scene selections, optional English subtitles, aspect ratio of 1.33:1 (the original was 1.37:1), and a welcome remastering of the theatrical trailer. Minor annoyance: a poorly-designed keep-case with fragile tab closures and a death grip on the disks.

Unlike the previous Eastman color transfers, Paramount's new edition is an attempt to restore the original Technicolor, with mixed success. (Paramount's 1999 DVD delivers finer resolution and more realistic color in many

scenes.) While the new transfer brings out details never before visible on home video, the process also causes bleeding and ghosting, and brightens the many day-for-night scenes so drastically that sometimes headlights, campfires, and flashlights look anomalous.

However, the first-rate special features are worth the price of the new set. Stills of Orson Welles at the microphone provide a screen-saver during an audio-only bonus, the complete, 59-minute CBS "panic broadcast" from October 30, 1938, *THE MERCURY THEATRE ON THE AIR PRESENTS THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*. Nicholas Meyer, Dr. John S. Partington, and Forrest J Ackerman ably host a 10.25-minute biography, *H. G. WELLS: THE FATHER OF SCIENCE FICTION*, with historic footage of Wells. Commentators on *THE SKY IS FALLING. MAKING THE WAR OF THE WORLDS* (30 minutes) include Joe Dante, Bob Burns, Bill Warren, Ann Robinson, Gene Barry, Jack Senter (from the Art Department), and Diana Gemora (monster-maker), with archival footage of earlier cast and crew interviews. Best of all, two unusually informative, witty commentary tracks, the first with Robinson and Barry and the second with Dante, Burns, and Warren, make the 2005 Special Collectors' Edition a must-have for fans of this sci-fi classic.

—Leha Loban

#### WAR OF THE WORLDS

Dreamworks Video—\$39.98

The 2005 version of *WAR OF THE WORLDS*, directed by Steven Spielberg from a screenplay by Josh Friedman and David

Koepp, updates H. G. Wells's 1898 novella to today's United States. Tom Cruise stars as a selfish, immature stevedore, Ray Ferrier. His ex-wife, Mary Ann (Miranda Otto), leaves their 10-year-old daughter, Rachel (Dakota Fanning), and teenaged son, Robbie (Justin Chatwin), for a visit with Ray. He's forced to grow up in a hurry, to escape from alien invaders that use humans as fertilizer and from human menaces, including a drunken, deranged cellar dweller, Harlan Ogilvy (Tim Robbins). When human diseases wipe out the aliens, Ray and his kids reunite at the home of his ex-wife's parents (played by Ann Robinson and Gene Barry, in one of many respectful tributes to George Pal's 1953 classic).

The first disk of the Limited Edition DVD presents the 116-minute Deluxe/Technicolor movie in the original aspect ratio of 1.85:1, with scene selections, optional captions, and several audio choices. The second disk adds close to three hours of top quality, live-action bonus features, with background material and info about animating the storyboards and creating the stunning visual effects. (Nobody mentions that 1979's *QUATERMASS*, scripted by Nigel Kneale, pioneered the idea of the mothership arriving to rouse alien machines, buried underground since prehistoric times.) The interviewees include Wells' grandsons, Martin and Simon Wells. The disk also contains 78 pages of production notes (a text essay) and a gallery of 76 sketches, stills, and storyboards.

Spielberg calls his *WAR OF THE WORLDS* "a science fiction horror film," influenced by how the public behaved during 9/11 and other catastrophes. Extensive behind-the-scenes footage shows cast and crew functioning efficiently and comfortably together. As usual in DVD extras, the participants lavish praise on each other, but Spielberg sounds sincere when he claims, "I love working with Tom Cruise." Throughout, Cruise acts sane, relaxed, and professional—in other words, nothing like the nut job who lectured Matt Lauer about psychiatry on the *TODAY* show and jumped up and down on Oprah Winfrey's couch, shortly before the movie's release. None of the interviews mention Scientology. Evidently the studio prefers to leave that Tom Cruise on the cutting room floor.

—Leha Loban

#### MISS MARPLE MOVIE COLLECTION

Warner Home Video—\$49.98

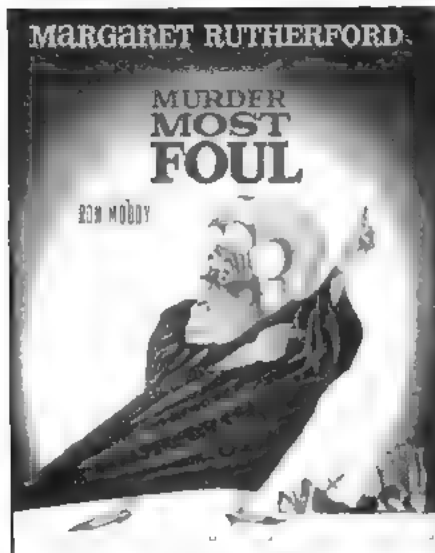
Agatha Christie considered Margaret Rutherford grossly miscast as her spinster sleuth, Miss Jane Marple, but that didn't stop the celebrated writer from dedicating one of her novels to the celebrated actress. Dame Agatha was no fool. Rutherford may have been too large, too tweedy, too rubber-faced a clown to serve as Christie's thin, aged,





gossipy spinster, but she was enormously popular. Actress Joan Hickson may have been—in fact, undoubtedly was—the perfect plain Jane in a series of telefilms made between 1984 and 1992, but Rutherford remains to this day the Marple of choice for many fans, fidelity to the source be damned.

Rutherford made four Miss Marple mysteries—**MURDER SHE SAID** (1961, based on the 1957 Marple novel *4.50 from Paddington*), **MURDER AT THE GALLOP** (1963, based on the 1953 Hercule Poirot novel *After the Funeral*), **MURDER MOST FOUL** (1964, based on the 1952 Poirot novel *Mrs. McGinty's Dead*), and **MURDER AHOY!** (1964, based on the whims of the screenwriters). Costarring throughout were the admirable Charles Tingwell as Inspector Craddock and Stringer Davis (Rutherford's husband) as Mr. Stringer, Watson to Miss Marple's Sherlock. Several of England's finest comic actors also graced the series—James Robertson Justice in the first film, Robert Morley in the second, Ron Moody in the third, and Lionel



Jeffries in the fourth. (Joan Hickson, by the way, also appears in the first film though not, obviously, as Miss Marple.)

The films look fine and are attractively boxed. Warner Home Video, however, continues its lamentable practice of making errors in presentation, in this case repeating the long-standing mistake of reversing the order in which the last two pictures appeared. (**MOST FOUL** was first released in February 1964; **AHOY!** followed in July.) Instead of reusing the same questionable "historians," they might consider hiring someone suitable to each project. They'll wear less egg on their corporate face in the long run.

—Richard Valley

**THE BEST OF ABBOTT AND COSTELLO VOL. 4**  
Universal Home Video—\$26.98

With this two-disc set, Universal completes its cycle of Abbott and Costello



films released to DVD and is to be lauded for their efforts. (The studio would have gained further laurels, however, had it shelled out the cash to clear up the legal problems concerning 1943's **IT AIN'T HAY** and included it in one of the sets.) Included in Volume Four are the team's three final films for Universal: **ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** (1953), **ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE KEYSTONE KOPS** (1955), and **ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE MUMMY** (1955).

**JEKYLL AND HYDE** has accumulated its share of hard knocks over the years. In a certain respect it's easy to understand why—the film isn't particularly funny. But detractors often fail to appreciate Boris Karloff's suave turn as the Janus faced fiend of the title. The actor, accoutered with a natty moustache and top hat, lends the film a degree of much needed gravitas. Sadly though, stuntman Edwin Parker largely doubles Karloff as Jekyll's hairier if not better half.

**KEYSTONE KOPS** marks a recovery from an Abbott and Costello standpoint. Here, Harry Pierce (Abbott) and Willy Piper (Costello) become celebrated comedy stars at Amalgamated Pictures after a roundabout pursuit of the con man (Fred Clark) who swindled them, culminating with uproarious shenanigans involving the eponymous slapstick sleuths. Director Charles Lamont obviously relishes the opportunity to revisit his silent comedy roots. As such, the film is a sweetly nostalgic salute to the frenetic buffoonery of Mack Sennett (who cameos as himself) and his contemporaries.

Although it sounded the comedy duo's death knell at Universal (only the 1956 United Artists release **DANCE WITH ME HENRY** would follow), **MEET THE MUMMY** is not without its charms. A parody of Universal's defunct Kharis series, the film follows Bud and Lou as they connive their way into the tomb of the mummy "Kharis" (Edwin Parker in a surprisingly effective performance) in pursuit of a legendary treasure. Unbeknownst to them, however, Kharis and his followers, led by unctuous Semu (Richard Deacon), have other

ideas in mind—as does Madame Rontru (Marie Windsor), a fatal femme also out for the loot. Excellent sets and rather elaborate floor shows compliment this pleasant diversion. (In an odd production gaffe, Abbott and Costello refer to one another by their real names throughout, but the credits list their characters as Pete Patterson and Freddie Franklin respectively.)

Disc Two is devoted entirely to special features; two of them glorified highlight reels. **THE WORLD OF ABBOTT AND COSTELLO** (1965) compiles bits from 18 of the team's efforts but overlays a needless narration by Jack E. Leonard. **ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET JERRY SEINFELD** (1994) features clips from Bud and Lou's television series hosted by Mr. Yadda Yadda himself. The real winner is **ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE MONSTERS**, a David Skal-hosted documentary tracing the behind-the-scenes saga of Bud and Lou's encounters with Frankenstein's Monster, Dracula, The Wolf Man, The Invisible Man, Jekyll and Hyde, and The Mummy.

—Earl Roesel

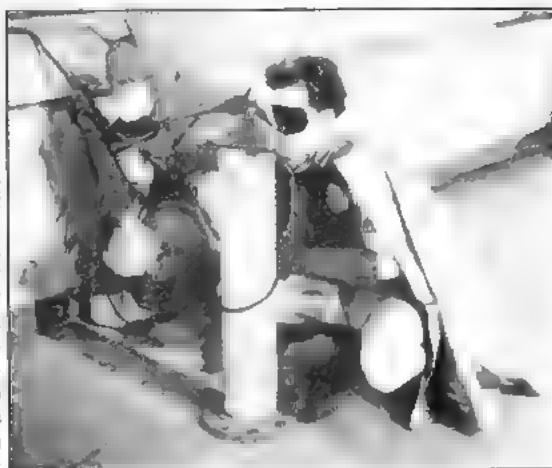
#### BATMAN

Sony Pictures—\$29.95

Released in 1943 during the height of World War II, the first **BATMAN** serial may come as a bit of a shock to those who don't know what to expect from it. For one thing, you'll find no comic-book supervillains. Batman is battling an evil Japanese agent named Prince Daka (played with style by J. Carroll Nash)—and the film never lets you forget its contempt for the enemy. Some may find this offensive, but in 1943, Japan was the enemy. (A particularly memorable scene has Daka contemplating tossing one of his zombies into a pit of hungry alligators.)

Bygone racism aside, buckle up and get ready for a grand time. *Batman* is arguably one of the finest examples of a Columbia serial. Lewis Wilson and Douglas Croft are splendid as a slightly baggy Batman and suitably youthful Robin the Boy Wonder.

The plot? Daka is gathering a group of "dishonored" Americans—people





who were tops in their field but wound up doing, all time—to help Japan win the war and overthrow America's corrupt form of government. The Caped Crusader gets involved when the uncle (Gus Glassmire) of girlfriend Linda Page (Shirley Patterson) is kidnapped by Daka in an effort to make him part of his league.

Many serial fans rank BATMAN above its 1949 sequel, BATMAN AND ROBIN. It's a tough call. BATMAN is exciting, funny, and has Charles "Ming the Merciless" Middleton in it—as a good guy! Even though it was made on the cheap, it's one of the very best Batman movies—ever.

Sony's uncensored BATMAN release is unquestionably the finest available of this title. (It is, however, missing the closing narration for Chapter Two.) The serial—which can easily stand with the best Republic has to offer—has long deserved to look this good.

—T. J. Moore

#### THE FLESH EATERS

Dark Sky Films—\$19.98

In the late 1950s, Hammer Films of England and Mario Bava of Italy began to inject more explicitly violent content into popular horror films. Soon following suit were American independent producers, including Jack Curtis and Arnold Drake. Their prototypical black-and-white shocker THE FLESH EATERS (1962) stands as an early entry in the low-budget gore cycle, along with



THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE (1962) and HORROR OF PARTY BEACH (1964).

THE FLESH EATERS ascends into gear as a chartered plane makes a storm-tossed landing at the shore of a mysterious island. The "manifest of fools" includes cocksure flyboy Grant Murdoch (Byron Sanders), tipsy actress Laura Winters (Rita Morley), and her female handler, Jan Letterman (Barbara Wilkin). They're later joined by Omar

(Ray Tudor), a seafaring beatnik. Omar's insatiable quest for "the word" leads him to an unlikely spokesman: marine biologist/Nazi sympathizer Peter Bartell (Martin Kosleck), who's using the island as a breeding ground for flesh-eating organisms.

The parade of ghastly deaths remains shocking today when regarded in the context of early sixties' cinema. The microscopic menace is represented by pin pricks to the actual film, a device that also "created" THE CAPE CANAVERAL MONSTERS (1960). However, coproducers Curtis and Drake up the ante by climactically depicting a couple of giant, crustaceous flesh eaters that are more impressive than viewers might have anticipated.

Dark Sky Films' DVD offers a nearly pristine transfer of the version preferred by Curtis. Missing are two infamous gimmicks, a shock color insert and a lengthy Nazi flashback sequence. The flashback has been included as a supplement, along with never-before-seen nude outtakes from that sequence that could have propelled the picture into adults-only theaters. Two short trailer previews round out the excellent disc package.

—John F. Black

#### KING KONG

Universal Home Video—\$30.98

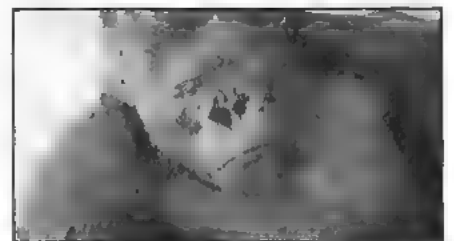
It's the movie that proves the old adage, "a fool and his monkey are soon parted," and it's every bit as big as you've heard. The 187-minute running time is undeniably too much and really does seem born more of a desire to attain the scope of Peter Jackson's LORD OF THE RINGS films than the dictates of the story.

Let's face it, this is a pretty simple tale—overzealous filmmaker goes to uncharted island to make a movie, finds giant ape, brings ape back to New York, ape breaks loose causing death and destruction, climbs Empire State Building, and gets shot to death by airplanes. Everything else is incidental, and while the incidentals are fun, there's a limit.

That said, KING KONG (2005) is nonetheless a remarkable film, and one made by someone quite obviously nuts about the original. It's as much homage as remake—and that may well be its strength and its weakness in one package. Jackson clearly intended to honor the 1933 film. The problem is that he's honoring not just what the movie was in 1933, but what it has become in our collective pop culture conscious. It buys into the fantastic notion put forth over the years that there's a bond between Kong and Ann Darrow—a nonsensical notion, since the original Ann Darrow (Fay Wray) spends the entire film screaming her head off whenever Kong is around. The one comment she makes about him is, "I don't like to look at him, Jack. It reminds

me of that horrible day on the island"—hardly an expression of simian devotion. Jackson's Ann (Naomi Watts) is a different proposition, one grounded in the bonding idea.

Setting the new film in 1933 was a wise choice. The story works better in that setting, not in the least because disposing of an overgrown gorilla posed a considerably greater problem then than now. Jackson's film brilliantly captures the era. Many of Jackson's expansions on the original are well-judged. In the original it never made much sense that filmmaker Carl Denham



(Robert Armstrong) planned to give his documentary a love interest and a plot by simply dragging along an actress and a trunk of costumes. Turning seaman Jack Driscoll (Bruce Cabot) into playwright Jack Driscoll (Adrien Brody) and throwing in a leading man, Bruce Baxter (Kyle Chandler), makes much more sense.

There's considerable room for criticizing the changes to Denham (here played by Jack Black), who is much more an unsympathetic, egomaniacal opportunist here than in the original. The addition of a subplot involving a sailor (Evan Parke) and his young protégé (Jamie Bell) is a strange case of the film wanting to stretch its fantasy/adventure quality and imbue it with some deeper meaning. (The protégé is reading Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.) Nevertheless, the new KONG has a cumulative mythic power, regardless of the occasional misstep.

The two-disc DVD presentation is widescreen and sharp as a dinosaur's tooth. The seemingly endless extras include a "post production diary," "Skull Island. A Natural History," and "Kong's New York."

Ken Hanke

#### THE SHAGGY DOG

THE SHAGGY D.A.

Walt Disney Video—\$19.99 each

Originally scheduled for DVD in 2004 but postponed to capitalize on some "corporate synergy" during Disney's 2006 remake release, THE SHAGGY DOG (1959) and its sequel, THE SHAGGY D.A. (1977), recently made their DVD debuts. Fans eager to add these titles to their libraries won't be disappointed. The new discs are worth the wait.

When Walt Disney decided to adapt Felix Salten's book *The Hound of Florence* (1923) and film it as THE SHAGGY DOG, he had already enjoyed success with two of Salten's earlier works, BAMBI



(1942, based on the 1923 book), and the now largely forgotten True-Life Fantasy film, *PERRI* (1957, based on the 1938 book). Incorporating a Cold War paranoia plot, Disney crafted a formula the studio would use for another 20 years—animals, car chases, and likeable, attractive young leads.

If it seems awfully familiar today, remember how new it was then and just how well audiences responded to Disney's first live action comedy. The film marks the first of seven Disney roles for affably frustrated Fred MacMurray, here playing a dog-hating mailman whose trouble prone son keeps changing into—well, you get the picture. Annette Funicello makes her feature film debut as the girl-almost-next door, while Tommy Kirk (in the title role), Tim Considine, and Kevin "Moochie" Corcoran, fresh from their *MICKEY MOUSE CLUB* serials, were also well-known to Mouseketeers.

The film still works, thanks to a fun sense of timing, convincing special effects, and especially—because of the appealing leads. Bonus features include Kirk, Considine, and Corcoran, joined by costar Roberta Shore, reuniting to reminisce in a special featurette and for an audio commentary, while another segment pays tribute to MacMurray.

Not quite as much fun but suitable for completists is *THE SHAGGY DO A*, the film's sequel. Dean Jones steps in for Tommy Kirk as grown-up Wilby Daniels running for public office while running from the dogcatcher whenever he transforms into the Shaggy Dog at inopportune times. The film reunited Jones and Suzanne Pleshette for their third Disney feature, but oddly, neither star is present for the bonus behind-the-scenes documentaries or audio commentary. Also of note is a featurette about recently deceased Robert Schiffer, legendary Hollywood makeup artist who spent the last 20 of his 70-year career at Disney, with 200 films, many of them classics, to his credit.

Kudos to Disney for releasing both titles in their original widescreen formats, although *THE SHAGGY DOG* also inexplicably includes a misguided

pan-and-scan, colorized version. Both films are fun, and bound to beat the new remake in terms of charm and originality.  
—Jim Holzheld

#### DAY OF THE DEAD 2: CONTAGIUM

**Anchor Bay Entertainment—\$19.98**  
There have been good zombie films (1978's *DAWN OF THE DEAD*) and bad zombie films still worth watching for laughs (1980's *CITY OF THE WALKING DEAD*). Then there's trash that should be reserved for torturing your worst enemy. *DAY OF THE DEAD 2: CONTAGIUM* (2005) is ready for your victim, sir.

The half-baked plot concerns a deadly virus that gets loose in a mental asylum (formerly a military hospital), transforming its victims into legions of the walking dead. No need to get too detailed or analytical—that's truly the plot. Additionally, we get horrid acting, ludicrous special effects, eighth-grade camerawork, and dialogue so bad that Ed Wood's writing seems stellar by comparison.

But the real fun of the disc is the audio commentary and behind-the-scenes footage with the writer/director duo of Ana Clavell and Jim Dudelson. The pretentious hype they offer only garnered hysterical laughter from this viewer. They speak about working on the script and story for 10 years and actually try to convince listeners that they've created a highbrow piece of cinematic art.

Don't let the cover art deceive you. Somehow they got away with copying the exact logo from Romero's original in an attempt to pass it off as a legit sequel. How? That's an enigma, but one that damn near warrants a public flogging for the filmmakers, not to mention a public apology from Anchor Bay for perpetrating this garbage on their loyal following.

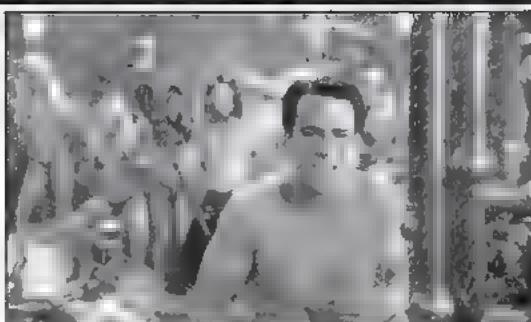
—Brooke Perry

#### REEFER MADNESS: THE MOVIE MUSICAL

**Showtime Entertainment—\$27.00**

The original *REEFER MADNESS* (1936) was an anti-marijuana propaganda piece called *TELL YOUR CHILDREN*. It was filled with gross misinformation presented in an extreme over-the-top form by an annoyingly insistent narrator (Joseph Forte).

*REEFER MADNESS: THE MUSICAL* played stages on both coasts before Showtime afforded it an ample budget for a 2005 televersion. Ingeniously building on the hysteria of the original film, the musical is a clever reworking and a definite contender for Instant Camp Classic. Nothing could be more



current and to the point than when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Alan Cumming) reminds us that "When danger's near/ Exploit their fear!" The musical numbers frequently skirt the boundaries of "good taste" and include an hallucinogenic animated cartoon, gore, dismemberment, unsafe sex, cannibalism, and tap dancing—all good, wholesome fun (with the possible exception of the tap dancing).

Other highlights include a very funny orgy sequence in which high-school innocent Jimmy Harper (Christian Campbell) takes his first hit of the nefarious weed, loses his inhibitions and clothes, and puts the devil (Cumming again) behind him—literally. There's also a Las Vegas-styled lounge act for the excellent Robert Torti as Jesus in a loin cloth. "Mary Jane/Mary Lane" features an infectious melody that spotlights the vocal abilities of Campbell and Kristin Bell (as Jimmy's sweetheart, Mary Lane).

Appearing in about a dozen roles, Cumming displays his remarkable versatility. The film wisely retains Campbell and Bell, who starred in the stage version. The cast also includes Campbell's sister, Neve Campbell, who briefly steals the show in a rousing dance at the local soda fountain. She makes





Steven Weber, excellent as conniving drug dealer Jack Stone, look like Gene Kelly. A real standout is Ana Gesteyer as Mae Coleman, Jack's abused girlfriend, revealing a wow of a singing voice. Also on hand as curvaceous seductress Sally DeBains as Amy Spanger. John Kassir plays Ralph Wiley, who runs afoul of a toked-up Marv.

DVD extras include a fine behind-the-scenes look at the original pay versions and a fun cast commentary.

Farnham Scott

**MARLENE DIETRICH:  
THE GLAMOUR COLLECTION  
CAROLE LOMBARD:  
THE GLAMOUR COLLECTION  
MAE WEST:  
THE GLAMOUR COLLECTION**

**Universal Home Video—\$26.98 each**

Universal once again has come up with more of their holdings in "franchise collection" form—this time mostly tapping into their Paramount titles with Glamour Collection sets featuring Marlene Dietrich, Carole Lombard, and Mae West. The Dietrich and West sets are comprised of five films each, while Lombard gets six representative movies. The approach is not without its drawbacks—drawbacks that may someday prove regrettable, since it omits some key films that may have trouble finding a subsequent home on DVD.



The choice of titles is sometimes odd, to say the least. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Dietrich set. While *MOROCCO* (1930), *BLONDE VENUS* (1932), and *THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN* (1935) are terrific choices, the sudden jump from her Sternberg period at Paramount to her 1941 Universal picture, René Clair's *THE FLAME OF NEW ORLEANS* (1941), is awkward to say the least. That pales in comparison to capping the set off with one of her later Paramount offerings, Mitchell Leisen's rather lackluster *GOLDEN EARRINGS* (1947). With *THE SCARLET EMPRESS* out on DVD from Criterion, this leaves two of her Sternberg Paramounts—*DISHONORED* (1931) and *SHANGHAI EXPRESS* (1932)—dangling, not to mention Rouben Mamoulian's *SONG OF SONGS* (1933), Frank Borzage's *DESIRE* (1936), and Ernst Lubitsch's *ANGEL* (1937).

That to one side, it's hard to complain about the quality of the prints.

*MOROCCO* is the least impressive, but it's the oldest and is probably the best the film has looked in ages. *BLONDE VENUS* and *THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN*, on the other hand, are both dazzling, while the forties films are fine.

The Lombard choices are better—and with *TWENTIETH CENTURY* (1934), *MY MAN GODFREY* (1936), and *TO BE OR NOT TO BE* (1942) already out on DVD, the set provides a well-rounded overview of her career. Most of her major Paramount titles—*HANDS ACROSS THE TABLE* (1935), *LOVE BEFORE BREAKFAST* (1936), *THE PRINCESS COMES ACROSS* (1936), *TRUE CONFESSION* (1937)—are here, along with *MAN OF THE WORLD* (1931) and *WE'RE NOT DRESSING* (1934) with Bing Crosby, the last named her best film prior to *TWENTIETH CENTURY*. The only major omission is *SWING HIGH, SWING LOW* (1937)—probably because it's a drama and the rest of the films here are comedies. Generally speaking, the quality is good, with *MAN OF THE WORLD* looking a little the worse for wear, but still perfectly acceptable. And it's certainly a treat to see the rarely shown *THE PRINCESS COMES ACROSS* and *TRUE CONFESSION*.

The Mae West set is the oddest. It's nice to finally see *GOIN' TO TOWN* (1935) and *GO WEST, YOUNG MAN* (1936) out on DVD, both being somewhat overlooked titles—despite the fact that the former is one of her most wickedly funny films, and the latter affords her no less than three leading men: sophisticated Warren William, reliable Lyle Talbot (see this issue's interview on page 56), and Randolph Scott (complete with "the large and sinewy muscles"). Her debut film, *NIGHT AFTER NIGHT* (1932, looking absolutely stunning here), is a given, although hers is a supporting role. (It gives Mae her defining line: "Goodness had nothing to do with it, dearie.") *I'M NO ANGEL* (1933) is quintessential West. But where is *SHE DONE HIM WRONG* (1933)? For that matter, *EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY* (1937) would have been a welcome addition, or new copies of *BELLE OF THE NINETIES* (1934) or *KLONDIKE ANNIE* (1936). Instead we get *MY LITTLE CHICKADEE* (1940), already available as part of a W. C. Fields set. The choice is not only questionable, but redundant.

All in all, though, the sets are good and reasonably priced. The packaging is nice, and the source prints are of generally high calibre, so maybe it's wrong to complain too much about the missteps in the selections.

Ken Hanke

**VOODOO ISLAND:  
THE FOUR SKULLS  
OF JONATHAN DRAKE  
MGM Home Video—\$14.94**

Two long-neglected gems comprise this Midnite Movies double feature. First, occult debunker Philip Knight



(Boris Karloff) journeys with his research team to investigate deadly rites alleged to take place on a Caribbean island. Ever the skeptic, Knight at first disbelieves these yarns, but as carnivorous plants, giant crabs, and sundry voodoo magic terrorize his fellow travelers, he begins to think otherwise.

Notoriously held up for many years as one of Karloff's worst films, *VOODOO ISLAND* (1957) is far from that. In fact, the film is intriguingly rich in Sapphic connotations thanks to the presence of Claire Winter (Jean Engstrom), who displays more than a passing interest in Knight's assistant, Sarah Adams (Beverly Tyler). In a sequence of almost jaw-dropping frankness, the burly hero, Matthew Gunn (Rhodes Reason), attempts to draw the woman out, only to be rebuffed. "What is your world?" he asks. "A very private world," she replies. "Very exclusive," Gunn persists. "And very special, too?" "Very special." The island itself (actual Hawaiian locations were used, adding tremendously to the atmosphere) is an impressively doom-laden place, a Sadean garden of deadly delights recalling the similarly blighted playground Ian Fleming gave to his evil Ernst Stavro Blofeld in *You Only Live Twice* (1964).

On the flipside, *THE FOUR SKULLS OF JONATHAN DRAKE* (1959) offers up even more deliriously macabre thrills. Here, the diabolical Dr. Zurich (veteran cad Henry Daniell) and his disquieting zombie aide (Paul Wexler) attempt to fulfill a singularly outré ancient curse—to decapitate every member of the Drake family and shrunk their heads. And there's more to Zurich than meets the eye—he possesses the head of a white man sewn onto the body of an Amazonian witch doctor!

A surprisingly gory affair for its era, the script engagingly piles one grim anecdote upon another; tombs, skulls, dismembered bodies. In addition, there may be some racial-cum-colonial subtext to be mined given the nature and origin of Zurich. Extras for both films are limited to trailers, but this is a highly recommended package for sure!

—Earl Roeser



### THE FIVE PENNIES

Paramount Home Video—\$14.99

Times change. Stars fall and are forgotten. Even worse, an actor is remembered for only one type of role and his unique work is pushed to the background. It is our good fortune to finally have one of Danny Kaye's finest performances on DVD. *THE FIVE PENNIES* (1959) is now available on a barebones release.

Kaye is known for his wild antics in some brilliant comedies, including *THE COURT JESTER* (1956), and for the occasional more subtle performance, such as his playing of the title role in *HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN* (1952). In *THE FIVE PENNIES*, he combines the best of these two approaches. In what purports to be the life story of famous cornet player Loring "Red" Nichols, Kaye is wonderful. Along for the ride is Barbara Bel Geddes, a terrific actress, as wife Bobbie.



Contributing to the film's excellence is the Oscar-nominated color photography in VistaVision by Daniel L. Fapp, the music performed by Louis Armstrong and Nichols himself (as Kaye mimes the playing), and the performance of child actress Susan Gordon as Dorothy Nichols.

Kaye's scene with Gordon as he croons the Oscar-nominated title tune (written by his wife, Sylvia Fine) is a touching a moment. Gordon (who, in the film, grows up to become Tuesday Weld) holds her own musically with Kaye and Armstrong and is a movie moppet to be adored.

*THE FIVE PENNIES*, its superb cast, 20 great musical numbers, and beautiful settings will be a welcome addition to your collection.

—Jack Randall Earles

### THE PIRATE MOVIE A NIGHT IN HEAVEN

Anchor Bay Entertainment—\$14.98 each

It was an almost delirious idea—make Gilbert and Sullivan's 1879 operetta *THE PIRATES ON PENZANCE* palatable to an eighties teen audience. And yet, it works thanks to some inventive touches and the likable performances of Christopher Atkins and Kristy McNichol.

While touring a kitschy pirate exhibition, meek and mild Mabel (McNichol) dreams herself back to the swash-buckling 1880s and there encounters handsome pirate Frederic (Atkins). Frederic has vowed to revenge himself on his former mentor, the pillaging Pirate

King (Ted Hamilton, doubling as executive producer) and win back the treasure stolen from Mabel's father, Major-General Stanley (Bill Kerr), thus ensuring the girl's hand in marriage.

What ensues is a mile-a-minute farago of swordplay, double entendres, anachronisms ("Hang five, honky!"), non-sequiturs, and saucy one-liners. If some of the material falls flat, the jokes and rigmarole flow so freely that it's barely noticeable. "You'll be hung," exclaims Mabel. "I am, I am—and very well, thank you" replies the Pirate King. "You're not gay, are you?" queries Mabel to Frederic. "I mean, the way you and that Pirate King gat around in those pleated shirts and all that leather." No *THE PIRATE MOVIE* (1982) won't win any awards for comedic sophistry—but then it only seeks to be a simple, fun-loving little adventure, and on that level succeeds quite admirably.

Par for the course, Atkins amply displays his famous bod (though not totally "in the buff" for this PG outing) and may even be at his most handsome as the winsome young sailor. McNichol offers an appealing performance. Cheers to Kerr as well, the one actor (as noted in the commentary) who could actually be believably dropped into a straight Gilbert and Sullivan adaptation.

Anchor Bay's release gives full vent to the film's superb soundtrack, providing both Dolby Surround 2.0 and 5.1 listening options (the latter being much more preferable, naturally). The picture, in 1.85:1 widescreen, is sharp and vivid. Also included is a commentary from veteran director Ken Annakin, moderated by Perry Martin. Though it rambles in places, the talk provides information on Annakin's musical background, how he took the project over from another director, and his vocal coaching of his stars.

Anchor Bay dipped again into eighties nostalgia with *A NIGHT IN HEAVEN* (1983), a fine showcase for the physical charms of its star, Christopher Atkins. Betsy (Lesley Ann Warren) is a repressed and depressed community college teacher married to idealistic former NASA employee Whitney (Robert Logan). Cajoled into visiting a rowdy male strip club one night by a group of friends, Betsy is shocked to discover one of the featured performers is her academically wanting but undeniably charming student Rick "The Rocket" (Atkins). An attraction of sorts soon develops; despite Betsy's better judgment, Rick's raw magnetism and the sorry state of her own marriage win out. And, one imagines, the excitement of an extramarital affair lends some spice to her otherwise humdrum existence. But can this peculiar arrangement last?

This is Atkins' show all the way, and the film nicely coasts along on his charm and presence. Certainly anyone looking for "revealing" views of the star will not be disappointed, as he's given ample nude and seminude scenes.

Many of the strip bar interludes and, to an even greater degree, the love scenes between he and Warren carry a palpably erotic charge. In a curious sense, *A NIGHT IN HEAVEN* may have been



ahead of its time; its idea of a female teacher carrying on a surreptitious relationship with one of her male charges mirrors the rampant Mary Kay LeTourneau syndrome that seems to encroach our tabloid front pages ever more frequently. Notable, too, is the soundtrack courtesy of Jan Hammer and Bryan Adams. (His much-played "Heaven" serves as the film's main title song.)

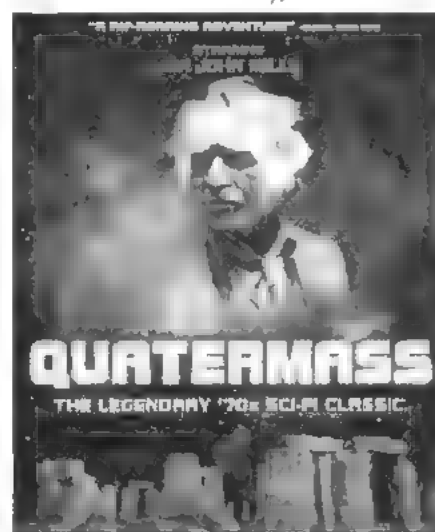
Anchor Bay presents the film in 1.85:1 widescreen with Dolby Digital Mono sound and is highly satisfactory from a technical standpoint, with the vivid, pulsing colors of the club seeming to burst off the screen. Extras are limited to trailers for *HEAVEN*, *SIX PACK* (1982), *RHINESTONE* (1984), and *LICENSE TO DRIVE* (1988).

—Earl Roesel

### QUATERMASS

A&E Home Video—\$39.95

This two-disk set features the original, four part color miniseries of 1979's *QUATERMASS* (also known as *THE QUATERMASS CONCLUSION*), from Euston



Films and Thames-TV. The full-screen print, with scene selections but no captions, has good color and contrast by the

Continued on page 31





# AN HOUR TO KILL THE EARLY POIROTS

by David Suchet

It is a genuine thrill to know that you are watching the definitive portrayal of any fictional character. The experience of seeing David Suchet in the role of Hercule Poirot must be akin to that of moviegoers in 1939, watching Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes for the first time. Suchet first took the part of the Belgian detective in the British television series AGATHA CHRISTIE'S POIROT (originally conceived as HERCULE POIROT'S CASEBOOK, the title of the tie-in paperback) in 1989. But this was not the actor's first foray into the world of Christie's famous creation; four years earlier, he had appeared as Inspector Japp in an American TV adaptation of *Lair of the Lady* (1985) entitled THIRTEEN AT DINNER (1985). Suchet would later say "I was so awful as Japp, so extraordinarily bad—possibly the worst performance of my career." But good came from the backlaster movie. Suchet was spotted by Agatha Christie's only child, Rosalind Hicks.

"She (first) saw me in BLOTT ON THE LANDSCAPE," the actor recalls, "which was a BBC adaptation of Tom Sharpe's novel, and she thought I'd be her next Poirot. But it was when she saw me with Peter Ustinov as Japp and remembered BLOTT ON THE

LANDSCAPE that she really decided." Joan Hickson's claim to the title "The Definitive Miss Marple" lies in the fact that the character's creator selected her for the role. Christie had been dead 13 years before Suchet first portrayed Poirot, but he can at least lay claim to the next best thing: an endorsement from Christie's own daughter.

THIRTEEN AT DINNER starred Peter Ustinov, who at the time had played Poirot on the big screen twice, in DEATH ON THE NILE (1978) and EVIL UNDER THE SUN (1982), and would do so again in APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH (1988). The setting was not the 1933 of the novel but budget-saving modern-day. Two more telefilms followed, again with modern-day settings and a cast largely composed of American actors: Tony Curtis, Faye Dunaway, Nicollette Sheridan, etc. The location of the last film, MURDER IN THREE ACTS (1986, based on Christie's 1934 *Three Act Tragedy*) was changed from England to Acapulco.

The following year work on the British series began. This time there would be no such lunacy—the adaptations would follow the spirit (if not the letter) of Christie's original works, the episodes would be set in

the appropriate time period, the 1930s, and Poirot would venture abroad only when the story demanded that he do so. Most important, the series would have David Suchet, an actor so serious about his craft that he would live the role of Poirot in order to bring the character to the screen.

Suchet's preparations for Poirot were far more strenuous than those employed by Geraldine McEwan for the recent revival of Miss Marple (see *Scarlet Street* #53): "I had my file on one side of me and a pile of stories on the other side and day after day, week after week, I ploughed through most of Agatha Christie's novels about Hercule Poirot and wrote down characteristics until I had a file full of documentation of the character. And then it was my business not only to know what he was like, but to gradually become him."

But the astonishing worldwide success of the series is not due entirely to Suchet's onscreen efforts. It would be churlish to fail to acknowledge the work of Clive Exton—the man who shaped the series based not on the Queen of Crime's 33 Poirot novels, but on her short stories,

*Continued on page 30*

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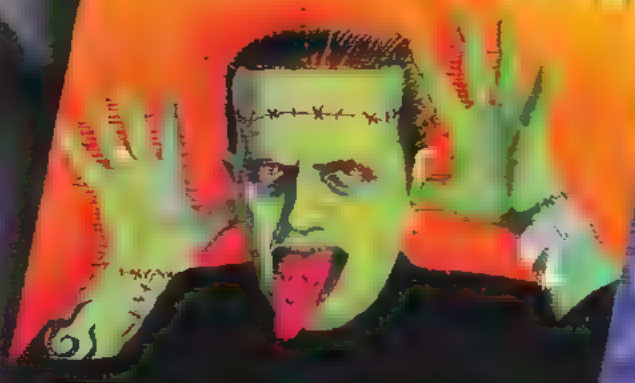
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## THE EARLY POIROTS

Continued from page 28

many of them published very early in her writing career for *The Sketch*. In the manner of Brian Clemens, architect of the Emma Peel era of *THE AVENGERS*, Exton not only scripted the majority of the episodes, but also served as script consultant on the few episodes he did not write, ensuring a cohesive tone to the series. He showed that it was possible to inject liberal doses of humor into each story without producing a farce in the style of the movie *THE ALPHABET MURDERS* (1965), starring Tony



Randall. His influence on the overall style of the series was such that, after the broadcast of the very first episode, "The Adventure of the Clapham Cook," British television critic Alan Coren suggested that *CLIVE EXTON'S POIROT* would be a more appropriate title for the series.

Perhaps Exton's most important contribution was the formation of a stock company of regular characters surrounding the great detective, whether they appeared in the original stories or not. Captain Arthur Hastings (played by Hugh Fraser) served as Poirot's Dr. Watson in the majority of the early novels and stories, before disappearing from the series in *Dumb Witness* (1937). The treatment of Hastings as a well-meaning bumbler is nowhere near as controversial as the similar depiction of Sherlock Holmes' famous friend in movies and on TV, since an examination of Christie's

Many mystery fans feel that the recent series of *POIROT* telefilms is missing three essential ingredients to their success—namely, Hugh Fraser as Captain Arthur Hastings (ABOVE), Philip Jackson as Chief Inspector James Japp (CENTER TOP), and Pauline Moran as Miss Felicity Lemon (CENTER BOTTOM). RIGHT: Hercule Poirot (David Suchet) and a baffled constable (Geoffrey Swann) investigate "The Tragedy at Marsden Manor."

books reveals that Hastings is a well-meaning bumbler, if nowhere near so wet as he is depicted in the Ustinov TV movies (where he is played by Jonathan Cecil).



Inspector James Japp is another character inspired by the Holmes stories—he shares many traits with Inspector Lestrade from the Holmes tales, including his resemblance to a ferret. Prior to the casting of Philip Jackson, the best-known Japp was David Suchet, but Jackson has made the part his own to the extent that he also plays the character in the long-running series of BBC radio adaptations.



The final member of the regular Poirot ensemble is the detective's superefficient secretary, Miss Felicity Lemon, a character originally created by Christie for her Parker Pyne stories. Played by Pauline Moran, Miss Lemon's contribution to each episode is largely the result of the scriptwriter's imagination; the character barely makes an appearance in any of the short stories, and so her role is often a combination of Poirot's unnamed landlady and his manservant George, neither of whom are included in the series. "It is wonderful when we are all together," Suchet commented. "I think it makes it really rich. And they are so good to work with. They understand their characters just as fully as I understand

mine." Too bad, then, that when the series was revived for the second time in 2003 (with Suchet as an executive producer having, presumably, considerable clout), none of these characters were included.

After the first season of 10 hour-long episodes, the show returned in 1990, preceded by a two-hour adaptation of Christie's novel *Peril at End House* (1932). The most significant change to the production was the appointment of comedy scriptwriter David Renwick, later the creator of the BBC's locked-room mystery series *JONATHAN CREEK*. In the gap between seasons three and four, another two-hour adaptation aired. The broadcast of *THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STYLES* (1990) was timed to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the publication of this, Christie's first novel (which appeared in 1921). It seemed that with the 1992 season, the makers had tired of the hour-long shows, preferring instead to tackle the novels *Death in the Clouds* (1935), *The ABC Murders* (1936), and *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* (1940), but the following year a final season of eight short story dramatizations appeared.

In total, *AGATHA CHRISTIE'S POIROT* aired 36 hour-long segments over five years, but there is some dispute as to just how many short stories exist. For example, the novel *The Big Four* (1927) is made up of 12 tales from *The Sketch*, restructured (with the assistance of the author's brother-in-law, Campbell Christie) as an espionage novel. Should it be treated as 12 separate adventures or one untypical Poirot novel? *The Labours of Hercules* (1944), Christie's most famous collection, derives its title from Poirot's decision to tackle 12 cases bearing the vaguest of similarities to the classical myth. In truth, the quality of these mysteries is startlingly variable, and in order to do them justice, they would have to make up the entire season. In this day and age, it is highly unlikely that a British TV budget could stretch to 12 episodes for such an expensive series.

Two suitable short stories remain unfilmed: "The Market Basing Mystery" and "The Lemesurier Inheritance," both collected in *Poirot's Early Cases* (1974). "Market Basing" is perhaps the

Continued on page 31



## THE EARLY POIROT

Continued from page 30

shortest of all Christie's tales and it shares its central gimmick with "Murder in the Mews" (1937), filmed in the first season. But it is worth noting that she expanded her story "The Plymouth Express" (1923) into the novel *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928), both of which have been dramatized with Suchet. "Lemesurier" concerns the murder of a child, and possibly the makers considered this too dark a topic for such a family-friendly series. Since Exton's departure, however, the adaptations have cheerfully explored the darker aspects of Christie's work, even adding it where it did not previ-

ously exist, so they should face no difficulties in adapting the novels *Dead Man's Folly* (1956) and *Hallowe'en Party* (1969), both of which feature child murders.

The series was cancelled in 1997, but you can't hide quality, and the show eventually returned, largely unaltered in structure and cast, in 2000. Four episodes later, POIROT was cancelled again. The indomitable Belgian is now on his third life, but the tone of his most recent adventures is far gloomier, and his little band of colleagues is sorely missed. These changes are no doubt due to the fact that Clive Exton has moved on, masterminding the successful JEEVES AND WOOSTER

(1990-'93) and creating the excessively cozy gardening/detective series ROSEMARY AND THYME (2003). But though purists have hailed the latest films as the most faithful yet (at least until the latest episodes), those hour-long adventures should not be discounted, by any means. For one thing, they are massively entertaining in their own right, but it should also be borne in mind that without them—and Suchet and Exton—we should not be where we are now.

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S POIROT: THE CLASSICS COLLECTION, which collects every hour episode on DVD, is available from Acorn Media for \$199.99.



## SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

Continued from page 27

standards of seventies television. Ripple, haloes, and overly-saturated color, noticeable for a few minutes into the first episode, soon improve. Inconspicuous fades to black replace the commercial breaks. The audio, remastered from mono into Dolby Digital 2.0 stereo, sounds better than the original, with the cheesy synthesizer score muted a bit.

Piers Haggard directs this last in the saga of four QUATERMASS serials made for British TV, then remade for theatrical release. Following in the H. G. Wells tradition, the aliens of screenwriter and novelist Nigel Kneale plot to exploit this Island Earth. Retired rocket scientist Bernard Quatermass (John Mills) figures out that ancient human ancestors built stone circles to warn people away from sites where aliens hid beacons underground. Now, with the warnings long forgotten, the mothership returns. The buried beacons broadcast a siren song, luring young people. As civilization deteriorates into worldwide chaos, thousands of these brainwashed Planet People (strongly resembling hippies) migrate to the beacons, where the mothership sucks in the harvest with a transporter beam that looks like a giant lightning bolt.

Quatermass, searching for his missing granddaughter, theorizes that the aliens may eat the kids or process them into some trivial commodity, such as perfume. (Smells like teen spirit?) He teams up with astronomer Joe Kapp (Simon MacCorkindale), Kapp's wife, Clare (Barbara Kellerman); Soviet scientist Gurov (Brewster Mason), and local District Commissioner Anne Morgan (Margaret Tyzack) to spoil the harvest and discourage further predation, by substituting a nuke for a shipment of hippies.

The Hammer films that follow the three earlier QUATERMASS TV series were complete remakes, with new sets and casts. For the 1979 theatrical release of QUATERMASS, Euston and Thames simply chopped up the TV miniseries to half its original length. The TV version, though it drags in spots, outshines

the movie, where the drastic cuts muddle the plot. The movie, included in this set as a bonus on the second disk, also eliminates some of the best scenes with veteran character actors, as Quatermass recruits elderly scientists, immune to the alien come-luther. The print, unfortunately without scene selections or captions, is marred by faded colors and soft contrast.

The other bonus feature, THE ENDURING MYSTERY OF STONEHENGE, is a 1998 History Channel program, from the IN SEARCH OF HISTORY series. Melissa Peltier directs this well-made overview of theories about the origin and purpose of Stonehenge. David Ackroyd narrates. The scientific approach, with interviews from folklorists, engineers and historians, makes a fine companion piece for QUATERMASS, since Nigel Kneale based his science fiction solidly on history and mythlore.

Lelia Loban

## THE MAGIC SWORD

MGM Home Video—\$14.94

MGM is to be commended for presenting THE MAGIC SWORD (1962) in beautifully rendered color and widescreen after years of it being available only as a public domain cheapie. The film was produced and directed by the unimitable Bert L. Gordon, who went all out to insure quality family entertainment. It's engaging fun, principally due to Gordon's fine production team, which included lighting cameraman Paul Vogel, who also lensed the George Pal sci-fi classic THE TIME MACHINE (1960), and production designer Franz Bachelin, the art director on JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH (1959). Bachelin would go on to lend his talents to several other fantasy titles, such as BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (1963), TWICE TOLD TALES (1963), and Gordon's VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS (1965). THE MAGIC SWORD is nicely edited by the capable Harry Gerstad, who copped Academy Awards for both HIGH NOON (1953) and CHAMPION (1949). Gordon's special effects are smoothly concocted and include a delightful two-headed, fire-breathing dragon for the finale



Chief among the film's assets is the somewhat weary but still commanding performance of venerable Basil Rathbone as Lodac, the evil wizard. Opposite him is one of the most pixilated of actresses and one of Tallulah Bankhead's favorite cronies, Estelle Winwood. Gary Lockwood of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968) fame oils up sweatily and lovely Anne Helm bathes prettily. They make an attractive couple as the heroic young knight Sir George and his Lady Fair, but it's left to old pros Rathbone and Winwood to lift the proceedings considerably. As an added bonus for fright fans, SHOCK THEATER horror hostess Maile "Vampira" Nurmi also makes an appearance, buried under considerable globs of makeup as an old hag.

THE MAGIC SWORD rewards viewers far more now that it is so cleanly and brightly presented. The DVD features the original trailer as an extra, on which it's interesting to hear Lockwood's voice initially revolved by someone else—after which his narration is taken over by that oh-so-familiar Preview Voice intoning "See the Magic Pool! See the 25-Foot Tall Ogre."

—Farnham Scott

Continued on page 71



# B.I.G. BUSINESS

## BERT I. GORDON

interviewed by Richard Valley





TOP LEFT: These grasshoppers may think the world owes them a living, but for mankind it's the BEGINNING OF THE END (1957) BOITOM RIGHT: This unfortunate victim isn't caught in the snood of the 50 Ft. Woman (not a Bert I. Gordon film), he's ensnared in the web of THE SPIDER, the original title of EARTH VS THE SPIDER (1958). ABOVE: In 1957 THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN was obviously sneaking copies of *Playboy* instead of reading Jim Warren and Forry Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland*

If ever a man was destined for big things, it's Bert I. Gordon. Born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in 1922, Gordon, after getting his start making commercials and documentaries in St. Paul, Minnesota, moved to Hollywood in the early fifties and brought with him *Amazing Colossal Men*, *Puppet People*, giant grasshoppers and spiders and rats and ants and teenagers dragons, and other fantastic creatures of his tireless imagination.

Gordon has written, produced, directed, and provided the special effects for some of the best-loved sci-fi and horrors films of the Baby Boomer era—and, if that wasn't enough, he's also directed such Hollywood legends as Basil Rathbone, Don Ameche, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Joan Collins, and the formidable (in every way) Orson Welles.

*Colossal Men*, *Puppet People* here, in a rare exclusive interview with *Scarlet Street*, is the long and the short of it.

*Scarlet Street*: How did you get involved in show business?

Bert I. Gordon: I was interested in making films way back, ever since I was seven or eight years old. I made slide shows, and then when I was eight, my aunt gave me a movie camera and I began to make movies with

simple plots, many of them with visual effects. People would pop on the screen and then they'd disappear or I'd turn them into ghosts by filming a background scene, rewinding the film, and then filming the "ghost" in front of a black cloth, which made the actor transparent. The "movies" were extremely amateurish, of course, but it was a beginning of fulfilling a dream—making movies. I went to the theater every chance I could. I had to see them all.

SS: What kind of films did you like?

BIG: Action, cowboys, murder—I was a kid, so love story's weren't too interesting. (Laughs) But basically I liked everything, so long as it was a movie.

SS: What was your first professional job as a filmmaker?

BIG: When television came on the scene, I bought a semiprofessional 16mm camera and started making commercials. I went to some ad agencies, got some deals and started filming. This was in St. Paul, Minnesota.

SS: Were these commercials for local businesses?

BIG: Yes. Then I got a deal to make a documentary for *Sports Afield* magazine on how to train hunting dogs. I filmed it in Canada at their hunting lodge, using my

hunting dog, a German Shorthair Pointer, as the star.

SS: Did you have a crew?

BIG: I had a small crew, since most of it was filmed outdoors in available light.

SS: Your first feature film as a producer was *SERPENT ISLAND*.

BIG: Oh, you don't want to see that one! (Laughs) Yes, that was the first film I worked on after moving to Los Angeles from St. Paul, but I wasn't the producer. I was the cameraman. It starred Sonny Tufts and was made for next to nothing. I'd decided to make the move to Hollywood after waking up one morning and looking in the mirror and telling myself, "You're







**LEFT:** The dolls created by Mr. Franz (John Hoyt) in *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE* (1958). For one thing, they're anatomically correct. For another, they're alive! **RIGHT:** The discovery by Lon Chaney Jr., Tom Drake, and James Craig, of a cheap costume earring belong to *THE CYCLOPS* (1957) gives rise to questions concerning the monster's sexual identity.

fooling yourself by thinking that you're making movies. You're not making movies." So I picked up and moved to California. I started to ring doorbells, got some meetings at studios, and just kept on ringing doorbells until I began getting work. I went to RKO and walked through the front gate and said, "I want to make films." And they sent me back to the front gate! (Laughs) Finally, I got work doing some visual effects. I got a deal at one of the visual effect houses and was using the 16mm camera I'd brought with me. A promoter saw me with the camera and said, "Holy cow! Can you operate that camera?" "Sure," I said, so we made a deal. He promoted the money and we made *KING DINOSAUR* in 16mm and blew it up to 35mm.

**SS:** How did you arrange distribution?

**BIG:** Again, we just rang some doorbells at independents and got a deal and it went out.

**SS:** *KING DINOSAUR* cleverly combined two interests of children in the mid-fifties.

*Kids were all intrigued by dinosaurs; you could find them in cereal boxes—and, of course, everyone was interested in outer space. The film mixes dinosaurs with rocket ships.*

**BIG:** For some reason, giant creatures fascinated me. *KING KONG* was one of my favorites.

**SS:** The studios were fighting to get people away from their television sets and back in the theaters. Did you find them very eager for product?

**BIG:** It took some doing at first, but after my next film it got much easier. *THE CYCLOPS* was a success.

**SS:** *THE CYCLOPS* certainly had bigger names in the cast.

**BIG:** Lon Chaney Jr., James Craig, and Gloria Talbott—Chaney was a nice man to work with, but in talking to him it was clear that he lived in the shadow of his father. He never achieved as great a success as his father, though he was exceptionally good in *OF MICE AND MEN*. He was excellent in that.

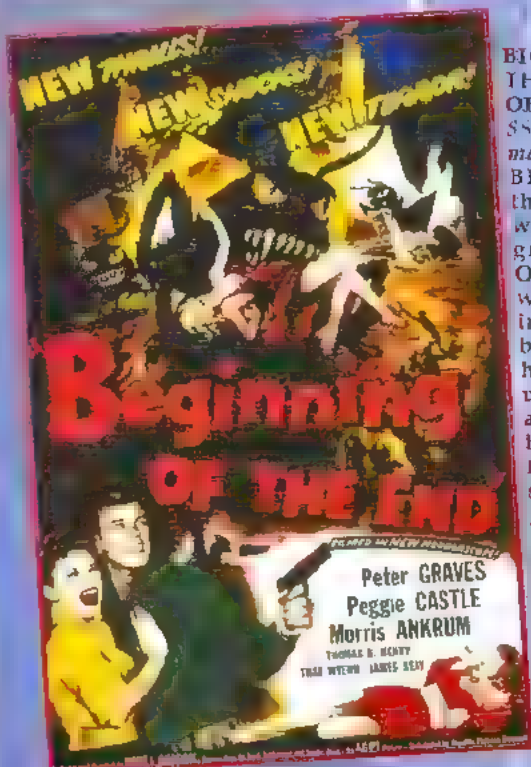
**SS:** How did you develop the special effects for your films? Was it trial and error?

**BIG:** Yes. In the beginning, quite a few of the effects and methods were my own innovation or creation. I didn't know the right way to do it, so I figured out methods that worked. Some of the effects were done in the camera, which saves a generation and gives you a sharper image. You don't have to work with an optical printer later, because the camera has already done the job. For instance, if you have an actor on the left side of the screen looking at a giant spider on the right side of the screen, you film the actor on the left with the right side of the lens masked. Then you run the film back, mask the left side, and film the spider on the right side. That way, the entire shot—actor and effect—is on one strip of film. But I quickly moved up to doing the effects with the optical printer, and today, of course, do it digitally.

**SS:** When you're doing the effects in camera and something happens to move the camera, the shot is entirely destroyed.

**LEFT:** The bloodthirsty buccaneers led by Blackbeard (Murvyn Vye) in Bert I. Gordon's *THE BOY AND THE PI-RATES* (1960) shake their booty. **RIGHT:** Oh, rats! Marjoe Gortner meets up with a giant rodent that's supped on *THE FOOD OF THE GODS* (1976). **PAGE 35 BOTTOM RIGHT:** Glenn Manning (Dean Parkin) wages the *WAR OF THE COLOSSAL BEAST* (1958).





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The story of the bold  
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the most fearsome black magic  
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The  
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Sword

BIG: Oh, yes, even when you're doing it with the optical printer—it's the same thing. I would set the camera up and have a little fence around it to keep everybody away.

SS: Have you ever had any trouble with actors reacting to special effects that aren't actually present on the set?

BIG: No, I would explain the action very thoroughly. I had storyboards for everything. They understood what they were looking at or running from, and reacted accordingly.

SS: *THE CYCLOPS* seems to be a preview of what was to come with *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN*, although *THE CYCLOPS* is confined to one small area. *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* is set all over Las Vegas.

BIG: Larger budget. Laughs! After *THE CYCLOPS* I made *BEGINNING OF THE END* for Paramount Theaters.

SS: In which you had to get performances out of a bunch of grasshoppers.

BIG: Apparently, I'm a big kid, I think, and I enjoyed it. I enjoyed working with rats, working with grasshoppers—it was the challenge. Okay, I'll give you an example of what I mean. When we were shooting *KING DINOSAUR*, I found somebody that had a couple of iguanas; he was a young trainer. So, we set up the lights to film the iguanas and they didn't move. They didn't blink an eye; they just sat there, frozen. It killed the whole day. We shot all this film and we couldn't get them to do anything. That evening, I went to the library and found a book on iguanas. I learned that they're only active under intense heat. Obviously, our lights hadn't been hot enough. So, the next day I had heaters pointing at them and, boy, they were jumping all over the place. (Laughs) It was beautiful! Then, with the rats in *THE FOOD OF THE GODS*, I set up what I called a rat factory. It was a big place out in the valley where they permitted things like that. I purchased several hundred rats from the outfits that raise them for research. Then I hired some university students who wanted to have some fun and make extra money, and we started to train the rats. We offered them food to make them move, and so on. Then I set up the camera, turned on the lights—and they didn't do a thing! It was the iguanas all over again! Finally, it occurred to me that it was the new environment that was keeping them from moving—the miniatures, the grass, the noise of the cameras, and the lights. So, we trained them all over again with the lights, with the miniatures with the camera running—without any film, of course—and sure enough, that was the answer. So, it's fun. I really enjoy the challenge.

SS: What about the grasshoppers in *BEGINNING OF THE END*? What kind of difficulties did they present?

BIG: They were eating each other. I had to separate them. They were really big. I got them from Waco, Texas, where they were experiencing a plague of locusts that were of the type I needed—huge, husky grasshoppers. I got someone to gather them up and ship them in crates, but California

wouldn't permit me to bring them in. I talked and begged, and finally they agreed that I could have them if only males were sent. I had to have all the females taken out of the crate. Then they met the shipment here at the airport and examined every grasshopper to make sure they were only males.

SS: How embarrassing for them. Why did you choose Chicago to set the finale of *BEGINNING OF THE END*?

BIG: I liked the Wrigley Building and the elevated. It was just a good location for the story I was telling, and since so many films for teenagers were set in California, the locations had become too familiar.

SS: How did you become involved with American International Pictures?

BIG: Well, I had finished *BEGINNING OF THE END*. I went to the funeral of a relative of the financier of the film where I met Jim Nicholson, the head of American International. He asked me if I had any ideas for another film—and the next day I had a three-picture deal with his company. (Laughs) During the funeral, I wrote down the idea for *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* on a piece of paper—the first film I made for American International.

SS: How did AIP work? You had two very different kinds of people in Nicholson and his partner, Sam Arkoff.

BIG: Well, Nicholson was the creative person and Sam was the business. Later, they switched positions and Sam became head of the company. They financed my films, but the rest was

left up to me. I had my own unit. If I wanted to make a particular film, I'd meet with Nicholson and Arkoff and set up the financing and take it from there.







LEFT: Filming *THE CYCLOPS*, Lon Chaney Jr. gives James Craig and Gloria Talbott lessons in overacting. CENTER: This Bert I. Gordon production was not based on the classic stage farce *CHARLEY'S ANT*. It was based on a story by H. G. Wells. RIGHT: The Amazing Colossal Man (Dean Parkin) keeps on truckin' in *WAR OF THE COLOSSAL BEAST*.

SS: At the time, AIP also had deals with Roger Corman and Herman Cohen. BIG: I met them and knew them, but everybody was independent. There was no structure at American International; they weren't an actual studio. They had some crew members, but there was nothing else, really; you just went off and made your film.

SS: With the budget provided by AIP.

BIG: The company quite often would get advances from theater chains that wanted their films—drive-in chains in California, in Texas, in other places, as well as independent foreign distributors.

SS: Were the budgets appreciably larger than what you had before you became associated with AIP?

BIG: Well, I'd had a pretty good budget before AIP on *BEGINNING OF THE END*, and the budgets were larger for *THE FOOD OF THE GODS* and *EMPIRE OF THE ANTS*.

SS: *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* is one of the most famous sci-fi titles of the fifties.

BIG: I remember when *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* opened in New York. They had a 40-foot-high cutout of the Colossal Man mounted above the marquee of the Paramount theater on Broadway, promoting the film. People waiting in long lines. And then, of course, it did very well at all the drive-ins. I was in Milwaukee when *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* opened and there were lines 'round the block, kids standing out in the rain waiting to see the picture.

SS: You went from colossal to minuscule when you made *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE*.

BIG: Well, I just came up with the idea, talked to Sam and Jim, and they said, "That sounds great! Make it!" So I wrote a screenplay.

SS: John Hoyt gives a wonderful performance as the doll maker who shrinks people so he'll have companions.

BIG: Well, he was a very nice man. About four or five years before he died, during an interview, he said the film that he enjoyed doing most was *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE*. It touched a sensitive part of his soul and he really enjoyed that film. That was a nice compliment.

SS: You returned to the subject of giant animals with *EARTH VS THE SPIDER*. How did your eight-legged star compare to working with iguanas and rats?

BIG: I used a tarantula, and they're pretty easy to manipulate. They look horrible—they're frightening—but you can pick them up and move them around; they're not poisonous. They bite sometimes. You put them in front of the camera, blow on them, and they move.

SS: Who did the makeups on your films?

BIG: There was a man named Jack H. Young, who was on staff at MGM. He wasn't available all the time, but I borrowed him whenever I could. He was good.

SS: You also used Paul Blaisdell sometimes, to design props.

BIG: Among other things he made the giant needle for *THE AMAZING CO-*

*LOSSAL MAN*. They try to drug the Colossal Man, but he grabs the needle and impales the doctor with it. I liked that. (Laughs) Paul Blaisdell was fine to work with, as far as our relationship went. But I remember hearing that, in later years, he felt his contributions to AIP's films had never been properly appreciated. He was a very creative man. He'd do whatever you needed very quickly, working in his own garage.

SS: *EARTH VS THE SPIDER* was your last film for AIP. Then, for a complete change of pace, you made *THE BOY AND THE PIRATES*. Had you grown tired of making sci-fi and horror films?

BIG: I don't know; quite a few of my decisions or ideas come in the middle of the night. There's no major decision-making process. I just get an idea I like, and I sit down and write it.

SS: You keep a notepad by the bed?

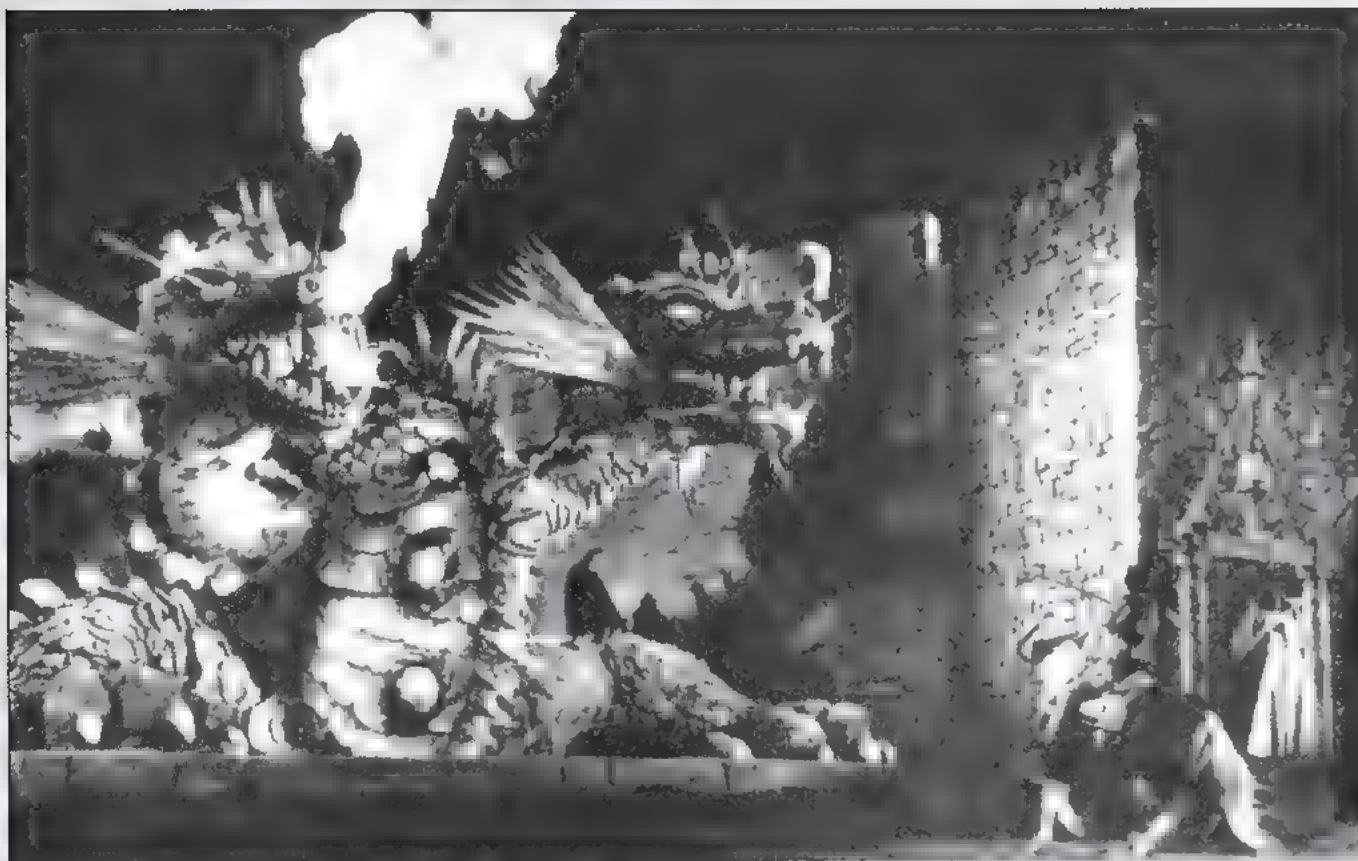
BIG: I used to, but now it's a tape recorder. (Laughs)

SS: In *THE BOY AND THE PIRATE*, you had to work with children—Charles Herbert and your daughter, Susan. How did they compare to grasshoppers, iguanas, and tarantulas?

BIG: No problem. It was just the hours that was a problem. You could only work children four hours a day and they had a teacher on set. That was the only problem. I shot it at Fox, using the artificial lake on their back lot. I had the same trouble with time constraints for children on *THE COMING*, the picture I made in Salem. The

LEFT: "This is the last time they'll pass me over for a part on *MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY!*" swears *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* (Glenn Langan). CENTER: Remember when Alexis and Krystal had that fight in the fountain on *DYNASTY*? Well, in *EMPIRE OF THE ANTS* Joan Collins went swimming with alligators! RIGHT: Man's best what? John Agar thinks otherwise in *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE*.





One of the screen's greatest fantasy creatures was the two-headed dragon in Bert I. Gordon's *THE MAGIC SWORD* (1962). The film starred Basil Rathbone, Estelle Winwood, Gary Lockwood, and—as a hideous hag—Maila “Vampira” Nurmi.

girl was a minor and there was a lot of night shooting.

**SS:** Susan is also in *TORMENTED*.

**BIG:** Yes, with Richard Carlson. There are some interesting visual effects in that film concerning the lighthouse, but you wouldn't even know it. In the film, you see the lighthouse on the island, and there's a lot of action set around it—but the lighthouse wasn't really there. I found a nice lighthouse some distance away, but I didn't want to go on location to film all the scenes there. So I went up north myself and I shot the lighthouse. Then I put it together with the footage we shot of the island. All we actually had to deal with during filming was the top of the lighthouse and some steps inside, and they were sets.

**SS:** *TORMENTED* is a terrific story, very moody and atmospheric. Richard Carlson starred in quite a few horror and sci-fi films in the fifties.

**BIG:** Yes, and he was very good, very nice to work with. Just about every actor I worked with on my films were pleasant and cooperative—including Orson Welles, which was a surprise to everybody! (Laughs) Everybody warned me that when he's in your film, you don't direct anymore. But he was nice, really nice.

**SS:** Orson Welles starred for you in *NECROMANCY*, in 1972. How did you get around the tendency on his part to take over?

**BIG:** Well, here's what happened. The day before his first day of shooting, his secretary called me and said, “Mr. Gordon, Mr. Welles asked me to inform you that he doesn't appear on the set before 10 o'clock and he works till five. There are certain other restrictions that I'll go into later, but he wanted me to inform you.” And this is the day before shooting, right? I thought, “He's going to direct my film, and we're going to go way over budget because he's not there on the set.” The next day, we were shooting at the mansion of the man who had invented the Barbie Doll. We had different bedrooms for the actors to use as dressing rooms. We hired a chef with a chef's outfit, and had a refrigerator filled with foods Orson liked—filets, wines, caviar and all—and a large barbecue on the patio outside his dressing room. So there it was—all the food he loved, and a chef at his command. All that was waiting for him when he came in for his first day. I was directing a scene in which he didn't appear, and I saw him on the sideline. After the shot, I walked over to him. “How are you, Orson?” He said, “Bert, I want you to disregard the phone call you received from my secretary. I'm yours whatever hour, whatever you want.” (Laughs) Can you imagine that? We went on location up north and the whole experience was just excellent, perfect, couldn't have been more pleasant.

**SS:** That's a great story. Did you ever get a chance just to sit down and trade stories?

**BIG:** We had several breakfasts and dinners together while we were on location. I had been informed by people who had worked with him to never mention his *CITIZEN KANE*, which many critics acclaim to be one of the finest films of all time. The powerful newspaper publisher, William Randolph Hearst, had prevented the film from having a proper distribution, and the film failed. Of course, I took the advice given me, and never once mentioned the film.

**SS:** You worked with some terrific talent over the years, including Basil Rathbone and Estelle Winwood in *THE MAGIC SWORD*.

**BIG:** She was delightful, and I enjoyed working with Rathbone, too. He didn't have a huge part in the film. I didn't shoot with him too long, but he was perfect as the villain. Very nice and very professional.

**SS:** *THE MAGIC SWORD* had a beautifully designed dragon.

**BIG:** It was a miniature, but not a miniature miniature. (Laughs) It was about 12 feet long, made by the people at Fox Studio, where I shot the film.

**SS:** Did you keep any of the props from your films? Do you have a collection of memorabilia, like the dragon or the giant needle?

*Continued on page 64*



# SMALL WONDER SUSAN GORDON

interviewed by Richard Valley and Tom Amorosi

**H**er father was a big man in Hollywood—in fact, he was the B.I.G. man, Bert I. Gordon. Nevertheless, while Susan Gordon appeared in a number of her dad's horror and fantasy films—ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE (1958), THE BOY AND THE PIRATES (1960), TORMENTED (1960), and PICTURE MOMMY DEAD (1966)—more often she found herself working for other producers and directors in such other films as THE MAN IN THE NET (1959) and THE FIVE PENNIES (1959). She also carved out a successful TV career for herself, starring on ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS, TWILIGHT ZONE, 77 SUNSET STRIP, and MY THREE SONS, among other classic shows.

She was petite, pretty, and talented—and it was talent, not family ties, that kept her acting.

We met Susan several years ago, when she agreed to warble a tune from PUPPET PEOPLE for our CD album JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS. We've been good friends ever since, and have been looking forward to running a definitive Susan Gordon interview in *Scarlet Street* ever since.

So without further ado . . .





When the saints went marching in, Susan Gordon, Louis Armstrong, and Danny Kaye went marching right along with them—and the result was the delightful musical biopic of Red Nichols and *THE FIVE PENNIES* (1959)

**Susan Gordon:** The first time I acted in front of the camera was when I was two years old in St. Paul, Minnesota. My dad was making a candy commercial. He sat me down on the floor in a white frock and put a box of chocolates in front of me and that's all he had to do, he didn't have to say action or anything. Before he finished shooting it, I was covered in chocolate.

*Scarlet Street:* Your first feature film was *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE*.

**SG:** Like most little girls, I had aspirations to be an actress, and so my parents enrolled me in acting school. I had been there for about a month or two when the head of the school called my parents and told them they were wasting their money and might as well take me out of the school. In her opinion, I had no acting talent. What every parent wants to hear! (Laughs) Then, when it came time for my dad to make *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE*, there was a part in it for a girl my age, a small part. Of course, I wanted to do it. He let me read for it, but he had already decided he wasn't going to give me the part, because he didn't believe Hollywood was a good place for children to grow up. So I read for him and he said, "Yes, that's very good. Now, let's go on to other things." But I persisted and he permit-

ted me to be in the movie as an extra and invited my entire Brownie troop to be in the movie as well; my friends got to be in the movie with me. On the day of the shooting, the little girl that Dad had hired for the speaking part was sick. She had a 102 degrees temperature, but her mom brought her to work anyway! Stage mom! It didn't do any good, because she was just too sick to perform. My dad handed the script to my mom and said, "You have 15 minutes to teach Susan the part, and she gets one take." One take only, because he didn't want anyone to think there was any favoritism in him giving me the part. So I learned the lines, I did the part, and that was the beginning.

**SS:** You were really on the firing line, weren't you? What else do you recall about the film?

**SG:** The sets were just so much fun to visit, because everything was huge so that the cast would look small in comparison. I have a picture of me with the huge telephone. I wish I could have kept the phone. Kenny Miller and Laurie Mitchell and the rest were having a lot of fun. And John Hoyt was such a sweet man. I couldn't have had a nicer person to work with for my first onscreen part. He was very patient and made me feel very comfortable in front of the camera.

**SS:** After *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE*, did your parents decide that the head of the acting school didn't know what he was talking about?

**SG:** Well, they definitely decided that I deserved a second chance. After my dad saw that I could act, he had the opening credits for the movie read "Introducing Susan Gordon." When the picture opened, my parents received calls from agents who wanted to sign me. But my parents were concerned with the effect Hollywood sometimes has on children growing up. So, before they would let me sign with an agent, they sat me down and said, "Okay, you want to act, so we'll give it a go, but there's a couple of stipulations. One: you can't let it go to your head. Acting is fun, but you have to have a normal life. You have to be sensitive of your sisters, so you can't talk about your career around them. Two: you shouldn't take seriously all the flattery that's given out so generously in Hollywood. Don't let it go to your head." The third stipulation came from my dad. "The day that they say, 'There goes Susan Gordon's father,' that's the day you stop working." (Laughs) But of course he was joking!

**SS:** How many sisters do you have?

**SG:** I have two sisters; I was sandwiched in between them.





**LEFT:** Susan Gordon brooked no objections from silly rabbits when she was the sole member of the Flavor Jury for a Trix, Kix, and Jets cereal commercial. **RIGHT:** Pint-sized Susan didn't get to be shrunk onscreen in *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE* (1958), but she had fun playing with the giant props between scenes

**SS:** Did they ever want to act?

**SG:** I believe they did. I know they'd also had head shots sent to agents. In *THE FIVE PENNIES*, my sister Carol was an extra in the group of children in the hospital scene. Patricia did a number of commercials and was an extra in the movie *CHAKADE*, but nothing came of their careers. Instead, they each developed their own talents. Patricia became an accomplished pianist—she teaches piano—and my sister Carol was a photographer and artist. We weren't competing and we could support and be proud of each other.

**SS:** What came next in your career?

**SG:** The first big interview was for *THE FIVE PENNIES*. They had a cattle call. There were 500 young girls up for the part. Paramount's casting offices were crowded with little girls and their mommies—in the halls, the waiting rooms, the annexes. I don't know how many hours we each had to wait before it was our turn to be interviewed, and then there were subsequent interviews as they narrowed us down. Fi-

nally, five of us were given a screen test of the poker scene. Now, in the screen test it wasn't Danny Kaye playing opposite me; they had somebody standing in for him. But just after I completed my screen test, before they let me leave, they were going to do a screen test for Barbara Bel Geddes with Danny Kaye. It happened to be the scene in which they're putting a sleeping Dorothy to bed, and they talk about putting her in a boarding house. The director asked me if I'd mind standing in for the sleeping daughter's part and I was thrilled. Even before I got the part, I was on film with Danny Kaye and Barbara Bel Geddes!

**SS:** The three of you probably looked good together on screen.

**SG:** Apparently so, because I got the part. Then, before they could begin filming, there was a musician's strike, so everything was put on hold until the fall. In the interim, I was cast in *THE MAN IN THE NET* and went to Connecticut with my mom to film it that summer. It starred Alan Ladd, Carolyn

Jones, and five kids—me, Charles Herbert, Mike McGreevy, Barbara Beard, and Steve Perry.

**SS:** Were any of the kids taller than Alan Ladd?

**SG:** No! (Laughs) Alan Ladd played an artist whose wife turns up dead. Of course the police suspect that he killed her, so he goes on the run. The kids, whom he's always been friendly to, hide him in a cave and help him solve the mystery of who really killed his wife. I'll never forget flying out to New York for the filming. There was a terrible storm that night, and the plane was diverted from New York to Boston, where they bused us back to New York. By the time we arrived at the hotel in New York, it was two in the morning. As tired as we were, my mom insisted we unpack our suitcases, because we'd feel better in the morning knowing that it was all done. So, we unpacked, went to bed, got up in the morning and went down to breakfast—and before we'd even gotten our orange juice and toast, they told us they were moving us out to

**LEFT:** Susan's first big-screen appearance was opposite John Hoyt (seated). *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE* featured Hoyt's own favorite of his many performances. Also pictured is Jack Kosslyn. **RIGHT:** Susan awaits filming on location, but doesn't look in the least bit *TORMENTED* (1960).



*"We had a very good father/daughter relationship, obviously, and working together on the movies added to it. You know those old movies, where there's a vaudeville team and one of them overhears that the other has been invited to the play the Palace, and he doesn't want to hold him back, so he steps aside? My dad used to say to me, 'You won't go to the Palace without me, will you?' And I'd say, 'I'll never go without you.' Then at one point, when things were happening big with my career, my dad said, 'Susan, it's okay; you can go to the Palace without me.'"*

the filming location in Connecticut. So, we had to pack everything up again! In Connecticut, they put us in a small, really old hotel—as you entered the hotel, there was a guest book displayed with George Washington's signature in it! Apparently, George had slept there. Judging by how lumpy the beds were, I doubt they'd changed the mattresses since then. It was an adventure, though—great fun.

SS: You appeared on live TV, too, which must have been daunting for a child.

SG: PLAYHOUSE 90 was broadcast live, and I was in a live television production of *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET*. The thing about performing on live TV was that the scenes progressed sequentially, from the beginning of the script to the end. So if your character evolved through the story, you could follow the changes through as the story developed. With movies and other shows, they'd shoot the scenes out of order. We'd have say, four scenes at one location. The scenes may occur at different points in the story line, but we'd film them all on the same day. That was especially true when you only had a week to do an entire show. Filming that way made it more of a challenge to develop your character. I remember thinking this when we were doing *77 SUNSET STRIP*. We did the last scene first, and I was supposed to be in a different place, emotionally, than I was at the beginning of the story, so it was quite a challenge. At least when you do a play or a live show, the character evolves as story moves along, and you have a better idea of where you're going and how you're going to behave. That makes for a much better characterization.

SS: Did you ever play on Broadway?

SG: Early on in my career, I was called to interview for *THE MIRACLE WORKER* on Broadway. My parents didn't let me audition for it, because they knew that they wouldn't have let me do it. It would have meant splitting up the family—my mom and I would have had to relocate to New York, while my sisters would have remained in Los Angeles with my father. I sometimes wonder where my career would have gone, had I taken the Broadway role. Well, I may not have played Helen Keller on Broadway, but I got a second chance at the part when,

in high school, the drama club produced *THE MIRACLE WORKER* in my senior year. Even though it was a high-school production, it was one of the most rewarding parts I'd ever played, because of the intense character development. Obviously, Helen Keller was a tremendous role.

SS: Tell us about the TV production of *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET*.

SG: *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET* was done as a live Thanksgiving Special in 1959. It starred Ed Wynn as Kris Kringle, with Peter Lynn Hayes, Mary Healy, and Orson Bean. It was such a fun show to do, partly because of the wonderful people in the cast, and partly because it was done live in New York. My mother and I stayed at the Astor Hotel. Every day, we walked to the rehearsals, which were held in a studio above a delicatessen. While we were rehearsing, the delicious aromas from the delicatessen below made their way upstairs to tantalize our appetites, and every day we'd go down to the delicatessen to have lunch. They had the best potato knishes and potato soup! Every day, Orson Bean would come to the rehearsal with an assortment of magic tricks and game to amuse me. I especially enjoyed working with Ed Wynn; he was so wonderful. He was the perfect Santa Claus, just a jolly old man. When people asked him how old he was, he'd always respond, "You're only as old as you feel—and I feel 65 today." I think he was really 73 at the time. (Laughs) The show was broadcast live on the Friday following Thanksgiving Day, 1959. That was the first time my mother and I were separated from the rest of the family on a holiday. We had our dress rehearsal on Thanksgiving Day, and our Thanksgiving dinner consisted of TV turkey dinners—cold ones, no less—served to us in our dressing room. It was a little bit sad and lonely. When we returned to Los Angeles on Saturday, my dad and sisters had a surprise for us—a real Thanksgiving dinner, if only a couple of days late.

SS: One problem with live TV—you don't get to watch yourself.

SG: *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET* was broadcast live on the east coast, and recorded on Kinescope for delayed broadcast in the other time zones. The rights the network had secured

for doing the live production of *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET* gave them permission to broadcast it only once, with no reruns. And although it had been taped on Kinescope, since it was only broadcast that one time, I had no chance to see it. Now, flash forward 44 years. I'm at an autograph show in Framingham, MA, and a fan comes up to my table and tells me that the network that had first broadcast the show had released boxes and boxes of tapes to the Library of Congress, and included on the list of tapes was my *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET*. At first I didn't believe him. After all these years of not knowing if a copy of the show even existed, how could it be that simple for it to just show up? He said the show would have to be restored because the audio and video came on separate tapes. He then made it his

*Continued on page 80*







## Bert I. Gordon's Classic Ghost Story by Erich Kuersten

Think of the films of Bert I. Gordon and fantastic images appear of giant spiders, amazing colossal men getting jabbed with giant hypodermics and shaking dinner out of passenger buses, grasshoppers attacking skyscrapers, and shrunken teens clinging to gigantic bosoms. But what about one of Gordon's most mature and moody works, a film noir ghost story about obsessive love from beyond the grave—1960's **TORMENTED**? Unlike anything else Gordon ever produced and directed, the film is sort of a lighthouse-staged version of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925) via Edgar Allan Poe.

The story concerns jazz pianist Tom Stewart (Richard Carlson), who is living on an island off the California coast. Tom's been having a long, smoldering, illicit love affair with Vi Mason (Juli Reding), a busty blonde chanteuse with whom he's recorded some tunes, but now he wants to get rid of her and wed sweet-natured young socialite Meg Hubbard (Lugene Sanders). Unfortunately, Vi refuses to go away, even after she "accidentally" falls to her death from the top of the island's condemned lighthouse (Tom doesn't murder her so much as watch passively when she's dangling—VERIGO-style—from a rusted lighthouse railing).

The next day, Tom is strolling the beach when he sees Vi's body floating in the surf. When he drags Vi ashore, her corpse turns into seaweed. Later, he notices ghostly footprints following Meg and him in the sand, and thinks he hears Vi's voice taunting him in the roar of the waves and the call of the gulls. However, the voice turns out to be Sandy, Meg's kid sister.

Sandy is played by Bert and Flora Gordon's nine-year-old daughter, Susan, who proves to be a nicely understated actor never relying on the "cute" tactics that make so many kids annoying in horror films. Instead, she expresses the pain of a child wise beyond her years, who is forced to make decisions based on the scant information she can glean from the adult world.

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Tom's fall from grace accelerates with the arrival of Meg's family and guests for the wedding. Meg and Sandy's dad, Frank (Harry Flier), sees right through Tom's falseness, but more through his own prejudice than acuity. ("It's bad enough to accept a musician into this family, but a jazz musician is asking too damned much.") True danger arrives in the form of a crazy beatnik sailor, Nick. He originally brought Vi to the island and smells a blackmail payoff in his future when Tom is unable to produce his former passenger.

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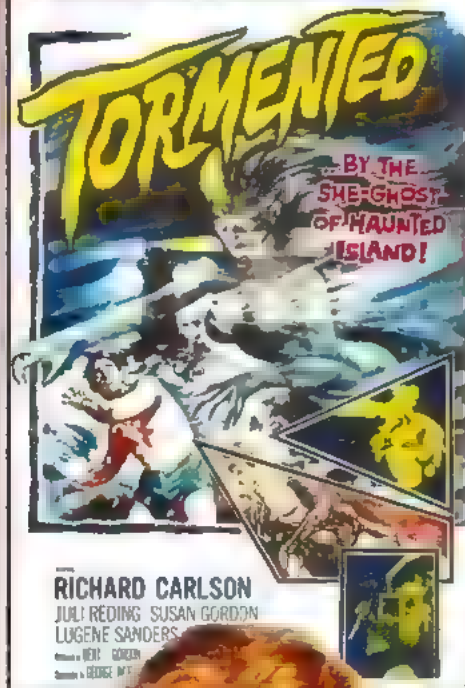
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A TERRIFYING STORY OF SUPERNATURAL PASSION!





## Bert I. Gordon's Classic Ghost Story

by Erich Kuersten

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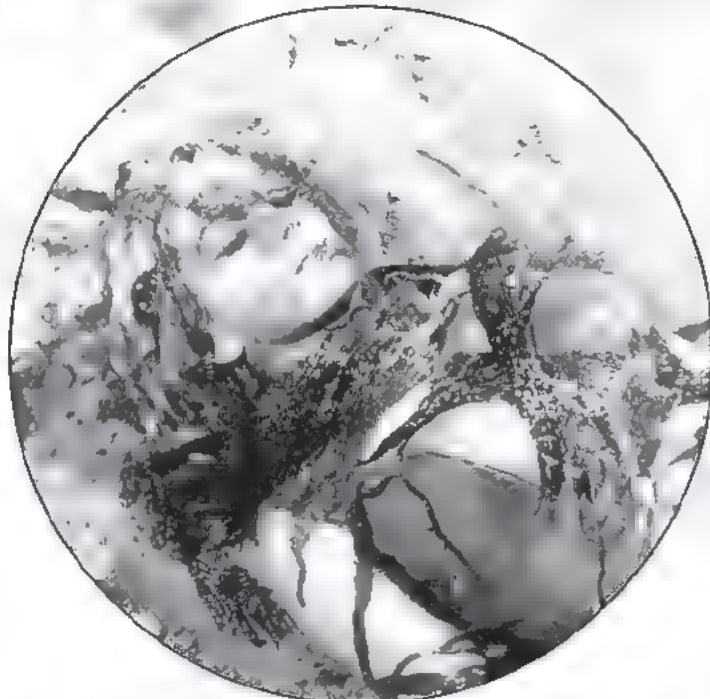
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sona in a subversively mature way, to gradually show the trapped male rat we always suspected was taking shelter behind the bland façade. Tom is not particularly evil, merely self centered and opportunist, but over the course of the film he moves from *noirish* patsy, à la Al Roberts (Tom Neal) in *DETOUR* (1945), to become a *TAL-ENTED MR. RIPLEY* (1999) sort of accidental serial murderer. (*TORMENTED* actually resembles *DETOUR* in the way it uses minimalistic sets to create a sense of in-

eyebrows, the sharp jab of her nose, and her yearning, pleading lips stand out. Another sparkling addition to the cast is Lillian Adams as Mrs. Ellis, the blind woman with an understanding attitude towards Tom's tom-cattening and a preternatural grasp of the supernatural situation at hand. Adams is remarkably low-key and believable. When Mrs. Ellis goes to the lighthouse by herself to confront the spirit, Adams makes palpable the woman's strength and control over the situation.



("My, that's a nasty laugh you have," Mrs. Ellis responds when VI's ghost lets out an unearthly titter.) A veteran of TV and film who's still working (she plays the Crazy Old Lady in the upcoming *BAR STARZ*), Adams lends a weighty presence to the roster of women looking after Tom.

Another groovy aspect of *TORMENTED* is the fact that, unlike those supernatural chillers of the era it somewhat resembles—*HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL* (1959) or *NIGHT TIDE* (1961), for instance—there's never



escapable doom.) As Tom devolves, the narrative focus becomes less on him and more on little Sandy, whose initial idealization of her future brother-in-law inevitably turns to dread.

Juli Reding as the *femme spectrale* is also inspired casting. This seems to have been Reding's only big-screen role, and she's dynamite. What she lacks in acting chops she makes up for in a sort of deranged enthusiasm and pulp novel cover-girl looks. The lines of her







**PAGE 43 BOTTOM RIGHT:** Lugene Sanders lived **THE LIFE OF RILEY** (1953-1958) before finding herself **TORMENTED** in 1960. **PAGE 44 TOP LEFT:** When push comes to shove, Tom Stewart (Richard Carlson) would rather shove. **PAGE 44 TOP RIGHT:** Is it the ghost of Vi Mason or is it a tossed salad? **PAGE 44 BOTTOM LEFT:** Among cinema shades, Vi goes to the head of her class. **PAGE 44 BOTTOM RIGHT:** Guilt over Vi's death drives Tom to madness and murder. **ABOVE:** The Hubbard family (Vera Marshe, Susan Gordon, Sanders, and Harry Fleer) discover that the island lighthouse is really a special effect by Bert I. Gordon.

much doubt over whether the ghost is real. At first it seems only Tom is able to see what's going on. He doubts his sanity, but before long he's over at the lighthouse exclaiming into the empty air, "I'm going to marry Meg, Vi! It's going to be just as though you never existed. Just in case you can hear me, Vi, good night!" Soon after, Vi is covering Meg's wedding dress with seaweed, crashing the wedding via a giant gust of flower-wilting wind, and trying to lure Mrs. Ellis to her death. Watching **TORMENTED** in light of so many ghost stories over the years, one can't help but appreciate the fact that it's so straightforward and direct. Though there are elements of psychology and nuance, this is a balls out ghost yarn, and—unlike Castle's gimmicky **13 GHOSTS** of the same year—it's startlingly mature, even with a kid figuring so prominently in the cast. Just compare Susan Gordon's character with Charles Herbert's all-American ghost-vision-glasses-wearing youngster in **13 GHOSTS**. Herbert is playing a kid revelling in his kidness, crush-free and confident in his spirited naivete. Gordon's character, on the other hand, struggles to assume the mantle of a mature adult, keeping secrets and making life or death decisions based on love of a no good man; we feel her prematurely worldly pain.

So you've got a real ghost with a va-va-voom figure and a haunting laugh, a touching, intelligent performance from the director's daughter, a fading sci fi icon in a darlingly unsympathetic performance, beach scenery, beatnik dialogue, jazz, a theme song, a nifty disembodied head, and a shock ending that would be the perfect last panel of a story in EC's *Vault of Horror*. You couldn't ask for more! **TORMENTED** stands the test of time, and proves that Bert I. Gordon deserves his reputation for delivering the B-movie goods with guts, maturity, and even a sense of finger-snapping cool.



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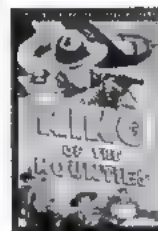
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# NOT A PUPPET ON A STRING

## KENNY MILLER

interviewed by Michael Barnum



It's incredible! Unbelievable! It is (this scene)! It is—it's a rotary dial! Scott Peters, Marlene Wilson, Laurie Mitchell, Kenny Miller, June Kenney, and John Agar are puzzled in Bert L. Gordon's *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE* (1958)

Could a small-town boy make good in Hollywood? Well, if you were Kenny Miller from Springfield, Ohio, the answer would be a decided yes! Kenny Miller (or Ken Miller as he was often billed) danced, sang, and emoted his way through numerous films of the fifties and sixties. Drive-in fare such as *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF* (1957), *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE* (1958), and *SENIOR PROM* (1958) benefited from the multiple talents of the blonde, youthful actor whose dreams of a career in show business bore fruit through his own perseverance, a positive outlook, and a little bit of luck. But it wasn't only the motion picture screen that would feature Kenny's gift for entertaining; he also appeared at night clubs around the country as a singer and guest starred on many of the popular television programs of the period. His records emanated from radio stations around the country. In recent years, Kenny has turned author with the publication of his autobiography, *Kenny Miller: Sings, Dances, Werewolves, Puppet People and Hollywood* (McFarland and Company 1999), and he

has been a fan favorite at film conventions all over the United States. Kenny Miller has fond memories of his years in Hollywood and the many famous—and not so famous—personalities with whom he has worked. He gladly shares his experiences in show biz with *Scarlet Street* readers.

*Scarlet Street:* How did you get your start acting professionally?

Kenny Miller: I lived in Springfield, Ohio, and I came from a very strict family. My father was a preacher and he didn't approve of my desire to be in show business at all. But I did a lot of stunts while I was in school, unbeknownst to him or my mother. At some point I won a talent contest and from that I got my own local radio show. This was fine with my parents. They approved of it because it wasn't in the theater with all of those terrible stage people! (Laughs) My father died when I was 16, and after I graduated at age 17 my mother finally realized that performing was what I really wanted to do. So, and so you moved to Hollywood, KM. Yes, I went to Hollywood. Back at that time—and I guess they still

have them now—there were these phony baloney agents and, unfortunately, I ended up involved with one of those. Thankfully, I had no money, so I didn't really lose anything. I honestly had no idea how to get into show business. While waiting for my big break, I, of course, did all the regular things to pay the bills. I worked at a place called Albert Allen's restaurant, which specialized in cheesecake—not the kind with young ladies, but the kind that you eat. (Laughs) My job was to clean out the pans and I swore I would never have cheesecake again after that job! Then I worked at a place called Carnation which was down on Wilshire Blvd. I scooped ice cream. I just did whatever I needed to do to keep going. Finally I decided to rewrite one of the shows that I had done when I was in school. I talked some people in San Francisco into putting up a little money—and when I say a little money I mean just a few hundred dollars. We rented a small theater and gathered a few people together who wanted to do a showcase. From this I got my first agent, George Ingersoll. He was a real agent, not the crooked



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**LEFT:** Bill Goodwin and Kenny Miller starred in *GOING STEADY* (1958). If Kenny looks nervous, it's because he hasn't yet been told that it isn't Bill Goodwin he'll be dating. **RIGHT:** The Puppet People protest that they misunderstood what it meant to accept a small role.

kind. I signed with him and he sent me out on many jobs.

*SS: What was your first film?*

**KM:** *FEARLESS FAGAN*. That was at MCM with Carlton Carpenter, Janet Leigh, and Barbara Ruick. I was ecstatic! I think I had one line in it—something like, "It's all clear over here, sir." (Laughs) Stanley Donen was the director. I was really a complete wreck working on this film. Here I was at MGM, the biggest studio around! I was just playing a soldier out in the woods looking for a lion, but it was very exciting for me.

*SS: You were drafted just as your career was getting off the ground, but this actually worked in your favor, didn't it?*

**KM:** I was stationed in Berlin, which was a break because I was originally going to be shipped to the Far East. Germany was just wonderful.

*SS: And that's how you became involved in the TV series *FLASH GORDON*?*

**KM:** A gal named Tala Birell was the entertainment director for the Sixth Infantry. She found out that I was a performer and I was assigned to be entertainment N.C.O. At this time, there was this new *FLASH GORDON* series filming in Berlin. I went over to see a guy named Wallace Worsley Jr., who had been a director at MGM. He was directing *FLASH GORDON*, which starred Steve Holland as Flash, Irene Champin as Dale Arden, and Joe Nash as Dr. Zarkoff. They had a character for me to play and Tala said that they could work it out so that no one would ever know that I was missing from my military duties. I played the part of Tough-Luck Hogan. Working on this show was an experience, to say the least. It was a very cheap production, filmed in a very beat-up studio that had been partly bombed out during the war. The production used quite a few Ger-

man actors who didn't speak very good English. It was quite an ordeal at times. Steve Holland, who played Flash, was just the sweetest guy in the world. I would guess he got the part because he looked just like what everyone thought Flash Gordon should look like. I did only three segments and almost didn't live through it. When I saw some of the dailies I thought, "Oh, God, if they ever show this in America I'll never work again!" However, it was a good training experience.

*SS: What was your first work on your return to Hollywood?*

**KM:** My first film after coming back to Hollywood was *THE HUMAN JUNGLE*, starring Jan Sterling and Gary Merrill. I was part of a gang of juvenile delinquents. There are four of us that get arrested for something or other and our scene takes place in a police station. I was thrilled to be working with Jan Ster-

**LEFT:** Scott Brady tends to a wounded Kenny Miller in *BATTLE FLAME* (1959), in which Kenny bloomed in the role of Orlando. **RIGHT:** It's the *ROCKABILLY BABY* (1957) swim team preparing to do a few laps—Gary Vinson, Tony Marshall, Jimmy Murphy, James Goodwin, Barry Truex, and Kenny Miller. **PAGE 49:** Kenny and Marlene Willis, **PAGE 51:** Kenny and *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* costar Cindy Robbins.



*"Herman Cohen was a great looking guy and it was quite obvious to people on the set how Tony Marshall, who was quite the muscle guy and stud man, got his role in I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF. I managed to get some good zingers in at him—all in fun, of course. I'd say, 'Oh, so did you two have a good night last night' or 'Where's Herman? He's not here yet?' Tony would say, 'Hey, man, what are you talking about?' He would never admit to anything."*

ling and I very much respected Gary Merrill. THE HUMAN JUNGLE was actually a pretty decent movie. It was a B film, of course, because it was made by Allied Artists, and I don't think they ever did an A film. (Laughs)

SS: EAST OF EDEN, however, was definitely *not* a B film

KM: I'm in a scene in a school yard Dick Davalos, Julie Harris, and I are talking about this submarine being seen off the Monterey Bay. We walk towards the icehouse to meet James Dean. Jimmy walks over and I say, "Hey," and so forth. Then I say, "I'll see you all later" or something and that's it for my character. That is my big scene in EAST OF EDEN (Laughs) They used that scene as the prologue at the preview, but then they later cut it out of the film

SS: You appeared with James Dean in both EAST OF EDEN and then again in REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

KM: I knew Jimmy socially, but I wasn't a close friend. I don't think anyone was really a close friend with Jimmy. Well, he did have this one guy, whose name I can never remember, who came out from New York with him and who was around all the time. He was kind of a slippery little guy. He was quite close with Jimmy for a long time. Several of us used to go over to this place called Googie's, which no longer exists. It was over on the Sunset Strip right next to Schwab's, the world famous drug store, which is no longer there, either. We used to hang out there and Jimmy always seemed very moody. Before I worked with him, I liked him better. I had met him before he had gone out to New York. He had been in Hollywood for quite some time, but couldn't get things going career-wise. Fortunately, for Jimmy, Elia Kazan took him under his wing for EAST OF EDEN. It wasn't that Jimmy didn't have the basic talent already, but to be coached by a great director for a whole year before you do a film, that really was a great break for him.

SS: So was there a considerable difference with James Dean when he began getting the star treatment?

KM: I have to be honest about it; he really changed. I'm a pretty open and friendly person. I say hello to people and I expect them to say hello back—but with Jimmy, you never knew what mood he was going to be in. During REBEL, he would hardly talk to anybody.

However, I did get to ride in his Porsche when he drove it onto the sound stage one time—which the studio was not thrilled about! We were zooming around the set! But for the most part Jimmy just didn't seem to be a happy camper much of the time. His screen persona was that moody rebel type and perhaps he decided to be that way in real life. He became moody and was rude to people. I do want to add that I very much respected Jimmy's talent. I wouldn't want anybody to think I'm trying to make him look bad or that I'm putting him down. He was a very talented performer.

SS: Were you aware of his bisexuality?

KM: People who were around him and closer to him, like actress Maile Nurmi, knew. In show business no one thought that much about whether someone was gay or bi or whatever, as long as they didn't flaunt it around, because that would have been the kiss of death to someone's career. You could never tell anybody. I remember a few people who had some problems with blackmail and the like, and had to put out great deals of money to keep certain magazines, like Confidential, quiet. That sort of thing certainly could be a problem. Jimmy was supposedly madly in love with actress

Pier Angeli. He was supposed to have had a great love for her and, I think, maybe he really did. But it was one of those things that just didn't work out. I don't think it was one of those "beard" situations like with Rock Hudson and Phyllis Gates. I had heard that Jimmy had lived with a few different guys back when he was in New York, and the little actor I mentioned earlier was obviously gay—I mean, he definitely didn't carry a shotgun in the back of his pickup (laughs)! He was one of those very grand flamboyant New York actor types

SS: What about the jacket that Dean wears in REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE?

KM: Not long ago, for the anniversary of James Dean's death, they showed REBEL as a tribute. Along with the film they also showed some wardrobe tests and screen tests. In the screen tests, I'm reading with Kathryn Grant and Pat





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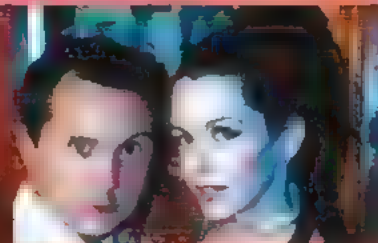
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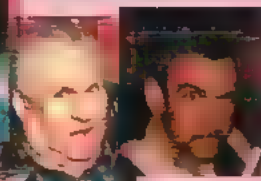
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Morrow, who were up for the part that Natalie Wood got. In one of the wardrobe tests, I'm wearing a red jacket and Jimmy says, "I want the jacket that Kenny's got on"—so he wound up with my jacket! (Laughs)

SS: What are your thoughts regarding Elia Kazan and the controversy surrounding him during the McCarthy era?

KM: I think Elia Kazan was probably the most disliked director that I ever worked with.

SS: Disliked by you or by others?

KM: Both. From my viewpoint. One of the things that was so interesting about Kazan is that he would sit in his car with a typewriter on his lap and write dialogue for the day and then give it to the actors. He did that a lot, just writing it as we went along. Now, it was one of the first days of shooting *EAST OF EDEN* and everyone was excited. This one kid who was standing next to me was fairly new to acting—about as new as I was, maybe more so. He started stuttering during his line and Kazan just tore him apart, which made everybody upset. He was so mean, so rude. He had just handed us the sides, for crying out loud! Then he tore off on one of the actresses, saying, "Where'd you ever learn to act? Who said you were an actress, for Christ's sake? You can't even read that line!" I really disliked the man, and this was even before I knew about the stooling on everybody during the McCarthy hearings. And as far as that goes, I think it was the most unforgivable thing in the world. He ruined a lot of people's lives by naming and accusing them, and in some cases the accusations weren't even necessarily true. My impression of Kazan was that he was a very grumpy, mean person. Maybe that was his creative mode. But, on the other hand, he did create some very wonderful films.

SS: In 1955 you made *RUNNING WILD* at Universal-International.

KM: That was a fun movie. William Campbell was the star and Kathleen Case, whom I adored, was also in it. And then there was that crazy, darling Mamie Van Doren. Mamie was an up-and-coming sex symbol. Of course, she had a mouth like a truck driver (Laughs) She had gone to the Hollywood School of Drama, which is where I also went after I left the service. That's where I first met Mamie. And there I am, in this movie, "the dancing Kenny Miller!" I'm there dancing with Mamie on top of a bar! John Saxon was in it. This was sort of his trial screen test. He didn't have a big part, but Universal put him under temporary contract. If he came across all right on screen, then they would put him under a full contract—and obviously he did, and they did, as he made a lot of films for Universal over the next few years. He was kind of a tense young man, but not to the degree of Mr. Dean. In *RUNNING WILD* we were so lucky to have one of the

most wonderful actor in the world to work with—Keenan Wynn. He would tell the dirtiest jokes! (Laughs) He was so much fun. Jan Merlin was in it, too, as well as a guy named Chris Randall, who was another contract player at Universal. Chris was very much a John Saxon type—a dark, good-looking guy. I don't know whatever became of him.

SS: Another teen picture you made was a Western called *THE YOUNG GUNS*, which starred Russ Tamblyn, Gloria Talbott, and Scott Marlowe.

KM: We filmed most of *THE YOUNG GUNS* out on the Iverson Ranch in the Valley. Gloria Talbott was just a sweet, very quiet girl. Scott Marlowe had recently finished doing a big film at Paramount. He was a big-time New York actor, a great looking guy, and a very nice guy, too. Scott usually ended up being cast as a heavy in films, dressed in black. Albert Band, who did a lot of Italian films, was the director. Now, we all had to ride and jump off horses and all that crap, because, after all, it was a Western. Well, Scott Marlowe had never been on a horse in his life! There's this one scene where we're robbing a bank and we all get on the horses and ride. The camera was at the bottom of this hill so that it could catch each of us riding past individually. Scott got on his horse and fell off. Instead of going to one of the wranglers and saying, "Look, I don't know how to do this. Help me. What foot do I put in the stirrup?" he tried to figure it out himself. So, each of us went galloping past the camera. Russ and myself and Perry Lopez—and the last one was Scott Marlowe and there he went ass over elbow! (Laughs) He'd lost the rein and had his hands around the neck of the horse. As soon as he got right in front of the camera he fell off, flat on his back!

SS: Scott Marlowe was another of the brooding type of actors.

KM: I don't know what it was with a lot of New York actors. They just can't seem to leave their work at the studio, I guess. (Laughs) Scott was very much a loner. I was always involved with the fan magazine type of stuff and they'd always invite Scott to functions, but he'd never go.

SS: *THE SEARCH FOR BRIDEY MURPHY* was based on a very popular book about reincarnation.

KM: I played Duncan Murphy, Bridey's brother. I'm in the flashback scenes. Unfortunately, it was a film that was made too long after the fact. They waited too long to cash in on the phenomenon, the whole thing about reincarnation and so forth. Noel Langley, the director, was very much into all of that stuff. Teresa Wright, who was the dearest lady in the world, played the woman who is sent back in time and Louis Hayward played the psychiatrist who sends her back. It was probably one of the most thrill-



ing films

for me to make, because I really do find hypnosis quite interesting. Brad Jackson was also in it and he was very much into the ethereal and the occult. I loved Brad; he was the greatest guy. He played Bridey Murphy's husband. Of course, we're both just in the flashback scenes and I don't think either one of us has any dialogue!

SS: What do you recall about *Teresa Wright* and *Louis Hayward*?

KM: I don't remember much about Louis Hayward. He wasn't terribly friendly, as I recall. He went to his dressing room when not on the set. But Teresa Wright was just the most wonderful, dearest thing, plus she was a wonderful actress. Now, I don't really think this was one of her best films. In fact it probably wasn't anybody's best film!

SS: One of the films you're best known for is *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF*, which really started the teen horror film craze. What do you recall about the producer of the film, Herman Cohen?

KM: I was just talking to actor Richard Harrison recently and he was telling me a story about Herman Cohen chasing him around the desk in his office. (Laughs) Of course, I knew that about Herman—and, fortunately, I wasn't Herman Cohen's type. Herman was a great looking guy and it was quite obvious to people on the set how Tony Marshall, who was quite the muscle guy and stud man, got his role in *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF*. Tony and I had a good time on *TEENAGE WEREWOLF*. I managed to get some good zingers in at him—all in fun, of course. I'd say things like, "Oh, so did you two have a good night last night?" or "Where's Herman? He's not here yet?" Tony would say, "Hey, man, what are you talking about?" He would never admit to anything. He also worked on *ROCKABILLY BABY*, where we both played

Continued on page 62





## The Sci-Fi Boys MEET THE MONSTERS

By Richard Valley

"Spielberg, Lucas . . . these guys are the revenge of the nerds, because when they were in school wanting to make films, they were skinny little geek kids . . . they were Sci-Fi Boys."

—John Landis

They were the boys who never much cared about sports. They were the ones who grabbed the latest issue of *TV Guide* the moment it hit the stands and poured through the movie listings for the horror films that the publication insisted on calling "melodramas." They were the ones whose world turned on the Friday or Saturday night showings of *SHOCK THEATER*, presided over by such fantastically ghoulish figures as Zachery, Ghoulardi, and Vampira, the ones who skipped the kiddie matinees of *LASSIE COME HOME* (1943) and *CLARENCE THE CROSS-EYED LION* (1965) but were first in line for *EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS* (1956) and *IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE* (1958).

And their favorite magazine wasn't *Sports Illustrated* or (arguably) *Playboy* or (for Kinsey's 10%) *Physique Pictorial*. It was a spooky little something called *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

They were the Sci-Fi Boys, and their gods were such as Ray Bradbury, who brought ancient thunder lizards and futuristic vistas to vivid life in his fiction; Ray Harryhausen, who gave startling movement to Ymirs, Rhedosaurus, and bronze Titans; and Forrest J Ackerman, who, with pioneering publisher James Warren, created *Famous Monsters* and inspired such later mon-

ster mags as *Castle of Frankenstein* and *Fantastic Monsters of the Films*

"Ray Harryhausen and I made a pact, promising to grow old and never grow up and to keep the pterodactyl and the tyrannosaurus rex forever in our hearts—and lo, it happened!"

—Ray Bradbury

**THE SCI-FI BOYS** (Universal Studios, \$19.98), written, produced, and directed by Paul Davids, presents Peter Jackson, George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, John Landis, Dennis Muren, Ray Bradbury, Rick Baker, Roger Corman, Ray Harryhausen, and other legendary film icons in a history of science fiction and special effects movies from the wild and funny days of B-movies to the modern blockbusters that have captured the world's imagination.

Paul Davids has been a Sci-Fi Boy since fifth grade—the year he first laid eyes on *Famous Monsters*. (Not literally, as far as we know.) Like so many others infected by a mania for man-made monsters, oversized ants, and puppet people, Davids made his own 8mm amateur monster movies—dozens of them. Through the magazine he discovered he wasn't alone—there were other Sci-Fi Boys throughout This Island Earth, all haunting the magazine racks, all making amateur films, all gluing and painting monstrous model kits of Frankenstein's Monster, Count Dracula, and the Wolf Man. These Space Children—or, as some parents put it, these Children of the Damned—will find their story told in **THE SCI-FI BOYS**. It's a time trip back to a special era, and so thorough is its evocation of that world that even Bob Burns, the amiable gent who is currently the guardian of that fantastic title prop from George Pal's *THE TIME MACHINE* (1960), is on hand, enthusiastic as always.

"I'm 70 years old and I'm still a Sci-Fi Boy, and I always will be!"

—Bob Burns

**TOP LEFT:** Paul Davids plays Gulliver to pint-sized pal Bill Goodwin in one of the amateur films made by the two boys during the mid-20th-century Monster Boom. **BELOW:** Davids and another fiendish friend (Jeff Tinsley) become model citizens. **PAGE 53 TOP LEFT:** A transformed Forrest J Ackerman (he usually looks much scarier) influenced generations of horror and sci-fi fans. **PAGE 53 LEFT CENTER:** Ray Harryhausen poses with some of the creatures he brought magically to life. **PAGE 53 BOTTOM RIGHT:** Paul Davids today. Behind him lurk the Terrible Trio—Forry Ackerman, Ray Harryhausen, and Ray Bradbury.



The early *Famous Monsters* created a brotherhood that still continues today, decades later. While still in junior high school, the efforts of Paul Davids and his cohorts received national publicity in *FM*, intensifying Paul's cinematic interests. About a year later, Paul and pal Jeff Lindsay were among the winners in the mag's amateur movie contest for a 8mm film

featuring a fire-breathing dragon and robot, based on a Forry Ackerman script called *SIEGFRIED SAVES METROPOLIS*. (The film had been budgeted at \$40 and spiraled out of control to an astronomical \$54!)

Hop into the time machine and travel 40 years into the "future." In the years between, Paul served as production coordinator and a writer for the most popular animated sci-fi TV series of the late eighties—*THE TRANSFORMERS*. He was executive producer of the Showtime film *ROS-*

*WELL* (1994), starring Kyle MacLachlan, Martin Sheen, and Dwight Yoakam, which was a Golden Globe nominee for Best TV movie. He also cowrote six *STAR WARS* sequel books for Lucasfilm with wife Hollace Davids, Senior Vice-President of Special Projects at Universal Pictures. The dream of working in the realms of sci fi had come true, but the world was changing.

The day that Paul attended Uncle Forry's 86th birthday bash, the idea for *THE SCI-FI BOYS* struck him. Realizing that the immortal trio who had sparked his imagination in childhood—Forrest J Ackerman, Ray Harryhausen, and Ray Bradbury—were nonetheless growing old, Paul became determined to memorialize their achievements in a unique way. He also wanted to pay tribute to another inspiration—George Pal. He wanted to convey what it was like to grow up under the spell of these maestros of monsters and sci-fi—what it was like to be a 12-year-old Sci-Fi Boy making amateur movies inspired by the films of one's heroes.

"This film charts the evolution of fantastic cinema, to put on record, for all time, the influence that the pioneers of special effects had on my generation of filmmakers."

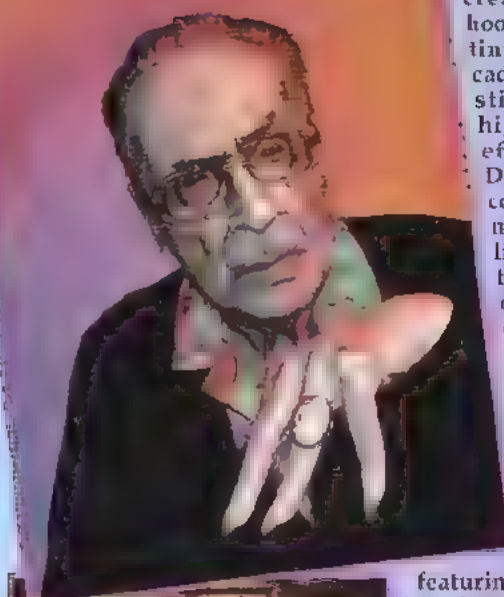
—Peter Jackson

Paul Davids concluded that *THE SCI-FI BOYS* was a story he wanted to tell—and that it could best be told as a sort of nostalgic love letter to a lost era. Fortunately, Paul quickly gained the cooperation of his idols, beginning with Forrest J Ackerman. Forry not only agreed to be in the film, but he assigned his three Ackerman Archive Coordinators—Joe Moe, Lee Harris, and John Goss—to help locate valuable archival footage that spanned his remarkable career. Soon after, Ray Harryhausen also agreed to cooperate. The timing worked out very well, because, during the production of *THE SCI-FI BOYS*, Harryhausen received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and Paul was there to film the ceremony. Ray Bradbury, the other member of the Unholy Three who had met in the early thirties and become friends for life, decided to help, too. Paul filmed Bradbury at a Los Angeles bookstore, at the Hollywood Walk of Fame Ceremony, and at the Los Angeles Industry screening of Peter Jackson's *KING KONG* (2005). Before long, Jackson himself agreed to take part in *THE SCI-FI BOYS*.

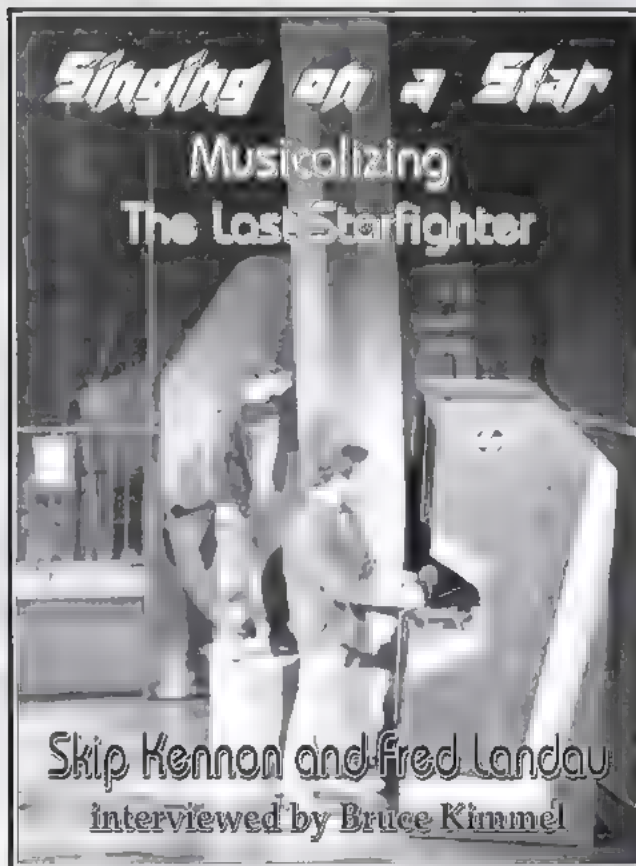
Legendary producer, director Roger Corman also climbed aboard the bandwagon, happy to share recollections of his days as America's premier low-budget monster filmmaker. Donald F. Glut, the indefatigable fan whose name seemed to appear on every third page of *Famous Monsters*, contributed scenes from his own amateur films. Rick Baker happily recounted for Paul's camera how *FM* had changed his life.

With support from so many fans and filmmakers and an abundance of interviews with notables of the genre—plus having collected faded 8mm monster movies that were the relics of several childhoods (including his own)—Paul Davids brought *THE SCI-FI BOYS* to life. In the years to come (hop into that time machine again!) it will serve as the definitive history of unique men and the amazing colossal era in which they lived and worked.

17







# Singing on a Star Musicalizing The Last Starfighter

Skip Kennon and Fred Landau  
interviewed by Bruce Kimmel

When I first heard that *THE LAST STARFIGHTER* (1984) had been turned into a musical, I thought, "Well, puh-lease, won't someone stop the insanity?" Then the damn thing went and got rave reviews, and I thought, "Well, puh-lease, how can it be? *THE LAST STARFIGHTER* as a musical—and it's good? Then I took notice of who'd written the score—Skip Kennon, one of the unsung treasures of the American Musical Theater.

When I started up my new label, Kritzerland, I paid a visit to Skip, and met his collaborator, Fred Landau. They gave me a demo CD and a script. I listened and read and found out the reviews were accurate—somehow, they'd taken this very likeable cult movie and turned it into a clever, tuneful musical while retaining all the action and fun of the film. How did they do it? Read on, MacDuff!

Fred Landau: When I was in law school, I worked on a parody of *NORTH BY*

*NORTHWEST*. The parody included a video game called *Cropduster* after the famous scene in the Hitchcock film. It had a musical scene about the empowering feeling someone can get playing a video game. This was 1983. Then, a year or so later, I saw *THE LAST STARFIGHTER*, which has that concept developed much further, with a video game actually being a testing ground for greatness. It really hooked into an idea I'd always found interesting—that something you'd least expect would change your life would, well, change your life. It hit me almost right away that this was something that could be a subject for a musical—the story of the "little guy" placed in an extraordinary situation.

Skip Kennon: Sounds like you were looking at everything as a possible musical. Terrible occupational hazard, but a good thing in this case.

FL: Yes, but I filed the idea away in my mind, until I started the BMI Workshop about 10 years later.

Bruce Kimmel: Skip was the teacher of the BMI workshop, right?

SK: Right. But actually they call it more of a moderator, since it's more a workshop than a class.

BK: How about a little history of Kennon and Landau?

SK: Well, the first project Fred and I worked on together wasn't an actual collaboration. I had written a one act called *FLAIBIR D'AMOUR*, which had a book by Terrence McNally, and which followed the life of a married couple from meeting to the marriage of their daughter. Fred had written a one-act musical about a young man that went from the young man's birth through death, and his romantic attachments along the way.

BK: Kind of like Rodgers and Hammerstein's *ALLEGRO*?

FL: Right, only in under 20 minutes.

SK: So we got the idea to take the one acts and combine them with several other similarly themed one-acts and make an evening of it, which played for a very brief but sold out run at the Triangle Theatre in New York. And since there's nothing like a show doing well and getting good reaction to make you want to keep working together, we started thinking about something else to work on together. Fred had been presenting *STARFIGHTER* at the BMI Workshop, and we decided to pursue the rights.

BK: That can't have been very easy—or was it?

FL: It turned out that, in whatever negotiations the screenwriter Jonathan Betuel had with Lorimar when he first wrote it, he had reserved the stage rights in the screenplay for himself. Very lucky for us. Warner Bros. had assumed the Lorimar catalogue, and the contact at Warners was very forthright about Jonathan having kept those stage rights for himself.

BK: Was Jonathan Betuel hands on or did he just give you his blessing and hope for the best?

SK: Jonathan kept very much in touch during the process—and even gave us an extension.

FL: I think Jonathan was very pleased with Skip's work on other projects, especially Skip's score for the musical of Jack Finney's novel *Time and Again*, and that gave him confidence that we would do well by his work. At the beginning when we were first making contact, Jonathan's business reps actually were gatekeepers for the rights. But when they saw the *E 4 Times* and *Variety* reviews of Skip's *TIME AND AGAIN* score, I think they knew they were dealing with someone who could be trusted.

BK: As I've said time and again, *TIME AND AGAIN* is one of the finest musical theater scores of the last two decades. How did you decide on the musical voice of the characters, the style of the piece, and how much book versus how much music? Did you feel it necessary to add things of your own to the mix that were not in the screenplay?

SK: We knew we couldn't put full-scale space wars on stage, so we opted for a storytelling approach which would allow for the humor of the film to come through, while still capturing the emotion.

FL: One practical aspect was our realization that the Robert Preston character disappears about halfway through the film, and we knew that part onstage needed an actor that would take a show-length journey. We combined the functions of two characters to make Centauri a star part equal in stage time to Alex Rogan, the 18-year-old video whiz.

SK: As to how much book versus music, that evolved during rehearsals. Our musical stage, Jennifer Paulson Lee, along with our director, Peter Dobbins, were great at editing and telling us where we could cut and get to the song.

BK: How long did it take to get a draft?

SK: We were both involved with other projects during the period from rights to stage. But once the Storm Theatre expressed interest and actually committed to doing it, finishing it was easy. Nothing like a real deadline.

BK: Did you invite actors or singers to try any of it out, or did you wait until there was a finished draft?

FL: At BMI, in the librettists workshop, the fellow workshop members actually read the script material aloud. So we got to test a lot of different things with people playing the roles.

BK: Did Skip write the songs first, or did the songs come out of what Fred was doing with the book?

SK: That went back and forth a bit. A draft of the first act's book was written before I even joined in, so there was material to cannibalize and put into song—but then Fred went back and restructured the scenes.

BK: The world of musical theater today is quite different from the world of musical theater that used to be, in almost every way, but especially in the development of new musicals. It used to be that someone—the producer, the director—had an idea, the idea would get written, the production would be scheduled, the show would play out of town and then come into New York. Now it's an endless process of readings and workshops. Other than the BMI workshop, did you do any of that for your show? I'm on record as saying that I despise the process and think it more harmful than helpful.

SK: In reality, the process has become a lot about raising money to put on the show. Fred was fortunate to have had the BMI Workshop as a place to present the early material safely and quietly, and then of course we were fortunate to have the Storm Theatre

just say, "We'll do it." There was no time to present it to anyone else, which in its own way was wonderful. FL: Skip had worked with Peter Dobbins and the Storm Theatre by music-directing a very well-received revival of an Irish play called *SPOKESONG*. Then, after that, Skip did the score for Storm's production of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, which was also well received. As usual, there's nothing like success to make people want to work together again, so Peter Dobbins asked about Skip's other projects, and we had a commitment to a real New York production.

BK: During the rehearsal period, did you make a lot of changes?

FL: There were lots of changes during rehearsal. On a first production, a lot is tailored to the strengths of the actors you have working on the show. The suggestions were from both Jennifer and Peter. They were both very valuable to the editing process.

BK: What did Jonathan Betuel think of his original screen play as a musical?

SK: Well, Jonathan Betuel and the original director of the film, Nick Castle, stayed to the very end of the closing night party.

FL: We took that as a good sign. (Laughs)

BK: The run at the Storm was very successful, and the show got great reviews. So, what's happened since with *THE LAST STARFIGHTER*?

SK: Our agent is submitting it to a number of places, but it seems like the Storm Theatre would like to do it again because it was so well-received there. We've gotten a good number of requests from high schools, colleges, and community theaters, and we're thinking about whether putting it on that circuit yet would be good or bad for the show's real commercial future.

BK: Has the cast album brought new fans and has it been helpful in having it out in the market place? It just seems to me that it's a perfect show for all sorts of theaters—a well-known film, a fun show that can be creatively done in any number of ways.

FL: This is the lawyer in me talking, but I want to emphasize at least once in this interview that our underlying rights are in Jonathan Betuel's screenplay, not the whole film. The cast album has really been great in getting

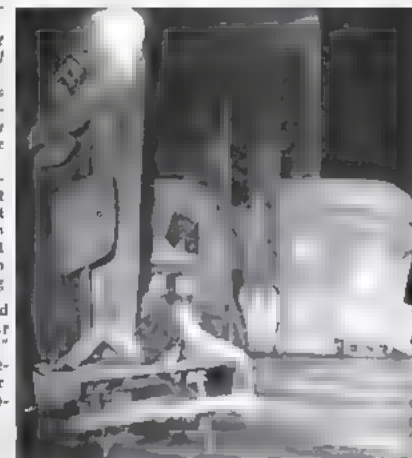
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SK: I even got an email from someone in Australia just the other day looking to do "Out of This World" in a sci-fi cabaret.

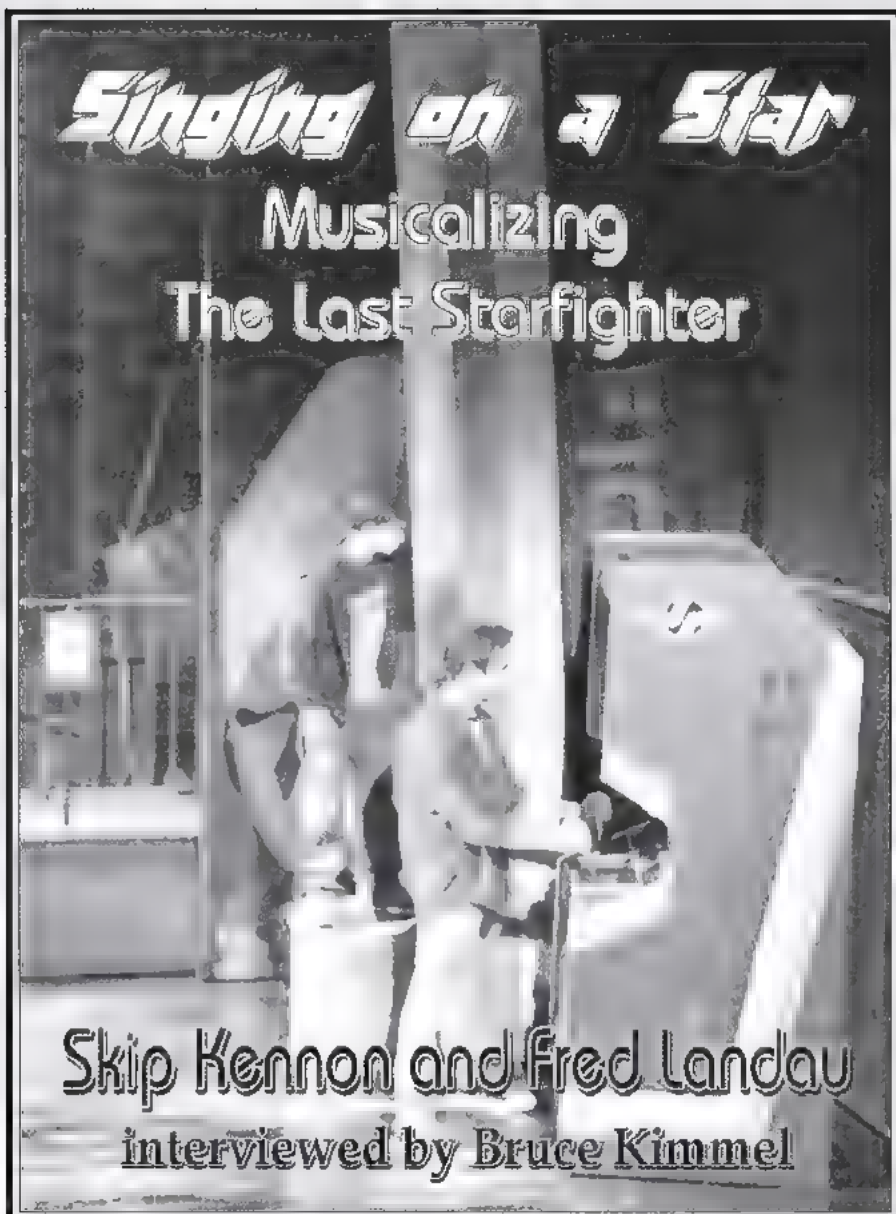
BK: This was your first actual collaboration together. Will there be more? What's on the horizon for Skip Kennon and Fred Landau?

SK: We're working on several projects—one a thriller, and the other a concept musical. There'll be more from us, both separately and together. And hopefully, Bruce, you'll be involved again with some of our work in some capacity in the future.

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PAGE 54: Brothers Louis and Alex Rogan (Travis Walters and Charlie Pollock) play *The Last Starfighter*, a video game in their trailer park home. TOP RIGHT: In the song "Out of This World," Alex and Centauri (Joseph Kolinski) leave this island Earth far behind. Also pictured: Brad Coolidge and Jonathan Richard Sandler. BOTTOM: Alex and Maggie (Julia Motyka) share a romantic moment between space battles.



**W**hen I first heard that *THE LAST STARFIGHTER* (1984) had been turned into a musical, I thought, "Well, puh-leeze, won't someone stop the insanity?" Then the damn thing went and got rave reviews, and I thought, "Well, puh-leeze, how can it be? *THE LAST STARFIGHTER* as a musical—and it's good? Then I took notice of who'd written the score—Skip Kennon, one of the unsung treasures of the American Musical Theater.

When I started up my new label, Kritzerland, I paid a visit to Skip, and met his collaborator, Fred Landau. They gave me a demo CD and a script. I listened and read and found out the reviews were accurate—somehow, they'd taken this very likeable cult movie and turned it into a clever, tuneful musical while retaining all the action and fun of the film. How did they do it? Read on, MacDuff...

Fred Landau: When I was in law school, I worked on a parody of *NORTH BY*

*NORTHWEST*. The parody included a video game called *Cropduster* after the famous scene in the Hitchcock film. It had a musical scene about the empowering feeling someone can get playing a video game. This was 1983. Then, a year or so later, I saw *THE LAST STARFIGHTER*, which has that concept developed much further, with a video game actually being a testing ground for greatness. It really hooked into an idea I'd always found interesting—that something you'd least expect would change your life would, well, change your life. It hit me almost right away that this was something that could be a subject for a musical—the story of the "little guy" placed in an extraordinary situation.

Skip Kennon: Sounds like you were looking at everything as a possible musical. Terrible occupational hazard, but a good thing in this case.

FL: Yes, but I filed the idea away in my mind, until I started the BMI Workshop about 10 years later.

Bruce Kimmel: Skip was the teacher of the BMI workshop, right?

SK: Right. But actually they call it more of a moderator, since it's more a workshop than a class.

BK: How about a little history of Kennon and Landau?

SK: Well, the first project Fred and I worked on together wasn't an actual collaboration. I had written a one-act called *PLAISIR D'AMOUR*, which had a book by Terrence McNally, and which followed the life of a married couple from meeting to the marriage of their daughter. Fred had written a one-act musical about a young man that went from the young man's birth through death, and his romantic attachments along the way.

BK: Kind of like *Rodgers and Hammerstein's ALLEGRO*?

FL: Right, only in under 20 minutes.

SK: So we got the idea to take the one-acts and combine them with several other similarly themed one-acts and make an evening of it, which played for a very brief but sold out run at the Triangle Theatre in New York. And since there's nothing like a show doing well and getting good reaction to make you want to keep working together, we started thinking about something else to work on together. Fred had been presenting *STARFIGHTER* at the BMI Workshop, and we decided to pursue the rights.

BK: That can't have been very easy—or was it?

FL: It turned out that, in whatever negotiations the screenwriter Jonathan Betuel had with Lorimar when he first wrote it, he had reserved the stage rights in the screenplay for himself. Very lucky for us. Warner Bros. had assumed the Lorimar catalogue, and the contact at Warners was very forthright about Jonathan having kept those stage rights for himself.

BK: Was Jonathan Betuel hands on or did he just give you his blessing and hope for the best?

SK: Jonathan kept very much in touch during the process—and even gave us an extension.

FL: I think Jonathan was very pleased with Skip's work on other projects, especially Skip's score for the musical of Jack Finney's novel *Time and Again*, and that gave him confidence that we would do well by his work. At the beginning when we were first making contact, Jonathan's business reps actually were gatekeepers for the rights. But when they saw the *L.A. Times* and *Variety* reviews of Skip's *TIME AND AGAIN* score, I think they knew they were dealing with someone who could be trusted.

BK: As I've said time and again, *TIME AND AGAIN* is one of the finest musical theater scores of the last two decades. How did you decide on the musical voice of the characters, the style of the piece, and how much book versus how much music? Did you feel it necessary to add things of your own to the mix that were not in the screenplay?



**SK:** We knew we couldn't put full-scale space wars on stage, so we opted for a storytelling approach which would allow for the humor of the film to come through, while still capturing the emotion.

**FL:** One practical aspect was our realization that the Robert Preston character disappears about halfway through the film, and we knew that part onstage needed an actor that would take a show-length journey. We combined the functions of two characters to make Centauri a star part equal in stage time to Alex Rogan, the 18-year-old video whiz.

**SK:** As to how much book versus music, that evolved during rehearsals. Our musical stager, Jennifer Paulson Lee, along with our director, Peter Dobbins, were great at editing and telling us where we could cut and get to the song.

**BK:** How long did it take to get a draft?

**SK:** We were both involved with other projects during the period from rights to stage. But once the Storm Theatre expressed interest and actually committed to doing it, finishing it was easy. Nothing like a real deadline.

**BK:** Did you invite actors or singers to try any of it out, or did you wait until there was a finished draft?

**FL:** At BMI, in the librettists workshop, the fellow workshop members actually read the script material aloud. So we got to test a lot of different things with people playing the roles.

**BK:** Did Skip write the songs first, or did the songs come out of what Fred was doing with the book?

**SK:** That went back and forth a bit. A draft of the first act's book was written before I even joined in, so there was material to cannibalize and put into song—but then Fred went back and restructured the scenes.

**BK:** The world of musical theater today is quite different from the world of musical theater that used to be, in almost every way, but especially in the development of new musicals. It used to be that someone—the producer, the director—had an idea, the idea would get written, the production would be scheduled, the show would play out of town and then come into New York. Now it's an endless process of readings and workshops. Other than the BMI workshop, did you do any of that for your show? I'm on record as saying that I despise the process and think it more harmful than helpful.

**SK:** In reality, the process has become a lot about raising money to put on the show. Fred was fortunate to have had the BMI Workshop as a place to present the early material safely and quietly, and then of course we were fortunate to have the Storm Theatre

just say, "We'll do it." There was no time to present it to anyone else, which in its own way was wonderful.

**FL:** Skip had worked with Peter Dobbins and the Storm Theatre by music-directing a very well-received revival of an Irish play called *SPOKESONG*. Then, after that, Skip did the score for Storm's production of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, which was also well received. As usual, there's nothing like success to make people want to work together again, so Peter Dobbins asked about Skip's other projects, and we had a commitment to a real New York production.

**BK:** During the rehearsal period, did you make a lot of changes?

**FL:** There were lots of changes during rehearsal. On a first production, a lot is tailored to the strengths of the actors you have working on the show. The suggestions were from both Jennifer and Peter. They were both very valuable to the editing process.

**BK:** What did Jonathan Betuel think of his original screenplay as a musical?

**SK:** Well, Jonathan Betuel and the original director of the film, Nick Castle, stayed to the very end of the closing night party.

**FL:** We took that as a good sign. (Laughs)

**BK:** The run at the Storm was very successful, and the show got great reviews. So, what's happened since with *THE LAST STARFIGHTER*?

**SK:** Our agent is submitting it to a number of places, but it seems like the Storm Theatre would like to do it again because it was so well received there. We've gotten a good number of requests from high schools, colleges, and community theaters, and we're thinking about whether putting it on that circuit yet would be good or bad for the show's real commercial future.

**BK:** Has the cast album brought new fans and has it been helpful in having it out in the marketplace? It just seems to me that it's a perfect show for all sorts of theaters—a well-known film, a fun show that can be creatively done in any number of ways.

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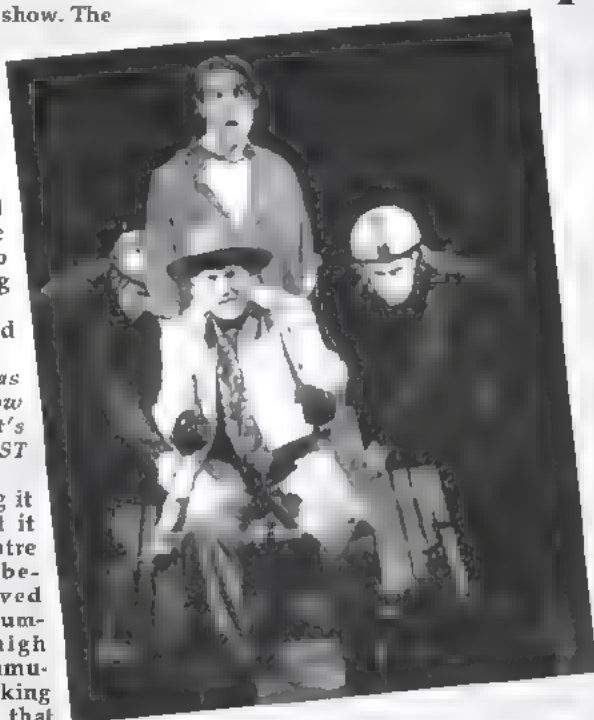
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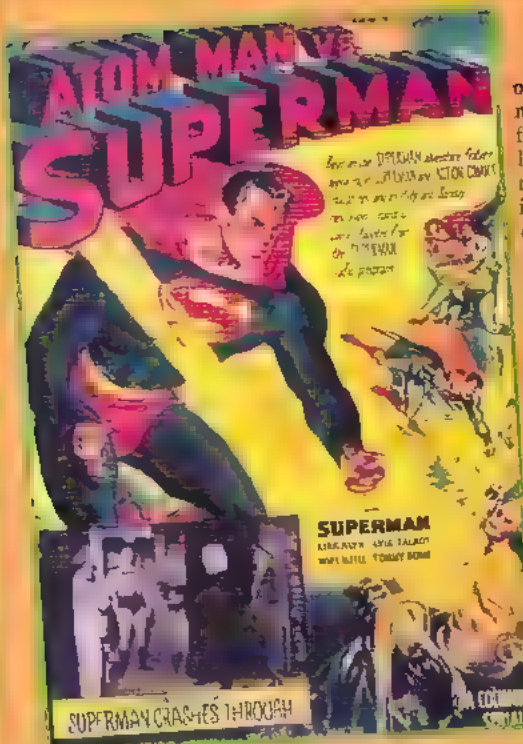
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# LEX LUTHOR MEETS THE PRESS LYLE TALBOT

interviewed by David Del Valle







Lyle Talbot will always be "Joe Randolph," the noisy neighbor on *THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET*. Joe lived next door to the Nelson family and borrowed relentlessly from Ozzie's well-stocked garage—never to return anything he borrowed. Lyle's son, Steve Talbot, played Gilbert on the equally long-running *LEAVE IT TO BEAVER*, making the Talbot clan well represented during the heyday of TV family entertainment.

Talbot played small but efficient roles throughout the thirties in such movies as *A SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT* (1933) and *GO WEST YOUNG MAN* opposite such leading ladies as Ginger Rogers and Mae West. He was proud of his work with the Screen Actors Guild and, with Ronald Reagan, had cofounded the organization. Talbot became known as a left-wing activist for SAC and would suffer for it when Hollywood producers retaliated by denying him larger roles in pictures because of his labor-organizing activities.

In the late forties, Talbot appeared in two serials that would cement his cult status. In *BATMAN AND ROBIN* (1949), he played Commissioner Gordon. Then he made film history as the screen's first Lex Luthor in *ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN* (1950). In the fifties, Talbot became acquainted with the notorious Edward D. Wood Jr., who directed him in *GLEN OR GLENDA* (1953), *JAIL BAIT* (1954), and *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* (1959). Wood became one of the actor's favorite drinking buddies throughout the decade. (Lyle's son, David Talbot, remembers his dad coming home "loaded" with Ed Wood in tow late one night and seeing Wood exit the bathroom a few minutes later wearing his mother's negligee!)

Lyle Talbot, who died in 1996, was one of the most charming men to meet in real life. He lived in a comfortable cottage high above the valley in Studio City with his wife "Bunny." This interview was conducted in their dining room in 1983, over coffee and sweet rolls. Lyle loved to talk show business and never displayed anything but gratitude for his long career. It had its share of dark moments, yet they were always balanced with good times—and it was on those times that Lyle liked to dwell...

*Scarlet Street* **THE THIRTEENTH GUEST** is a well-known murder mystery from 1932. You starred opposite Ginger Rogers.

**Lyle Talbot:** Well, I was under contract to Warner Bros. at the time. They would loan you out to other studios. *THE THIRTEENTH GUEST* and *SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT* were made independently by a wonderful wonderful man who made independent films on Poverty Row—M. H. Hoffman. If Warners didn't have anything for you, they'd loan you out. The independent filmmakers in those days had a rather difficult time, because all the studios owned all the theaters; they controlled the whole thing. Independent producers could get their movies into second-run houses.

**SS:** *THE THIRTEENTH GUEST* was a kind of rehashing of *THE CAT AND THE CANARY*.

**LT:** I had done *THE CAT AND THE CANARY* onstage in a stock company, actually. I was loaned out for *THE THIRTEENTH GUEST*; the studio just said you were working for M. H. Hoffman and you couldn't refuse. Well, you could refuse, but then you were put on suspension. We made it in about six shooting days—one week, because we always worked Saturday. The five-day week didn't come in until long after we started the Screen Actors Guild. It was fun making it. We had a lot of good actors. There was a great guy in those days named Maurice Black, who was a villain. And we had the wonderful black actress Louise Beavers.

**SS:** Did you play a lot of stock?

**LT:** Stock companies were all over the country; resident stock companies. My old friend Ralph Bellamy had his own company in Des Moines and I had my own company. The Lyle Talbot Players in Memphis, Tennessee. These were resident companies. They weren't repertory companies; they weren't called that; they were called stock companies. You played a different play each week. You had the same cast. You had your leading man and leading woman, the second leading man and second leading woman, and the comic and character people. You would play what ever the part was that you seemed

most suited for, of course. We did all the old mysteries—*THE GORILLA*, which was a very famous one; *THE CAT AND THE CANARY*; *MISLEADING LADY*; and Mary Roberts Reinhardt's *THE BAT*. I was familiar with that type of play, so that it was not unusual for me to do *THE THIRTEENTH GUEST*. Besides, like Cagney always said, "It's a job." You were an actor and they'd give you the script and you'd play such and such. And you couldn't turn it down. Well, Bette Davis did when she was at Warner Bros. but she lost out and had to play what they gave her.

**SS:** She was originally a contract player at Universal, but Carl Laemmle said she looked too much like Slim Sumner.

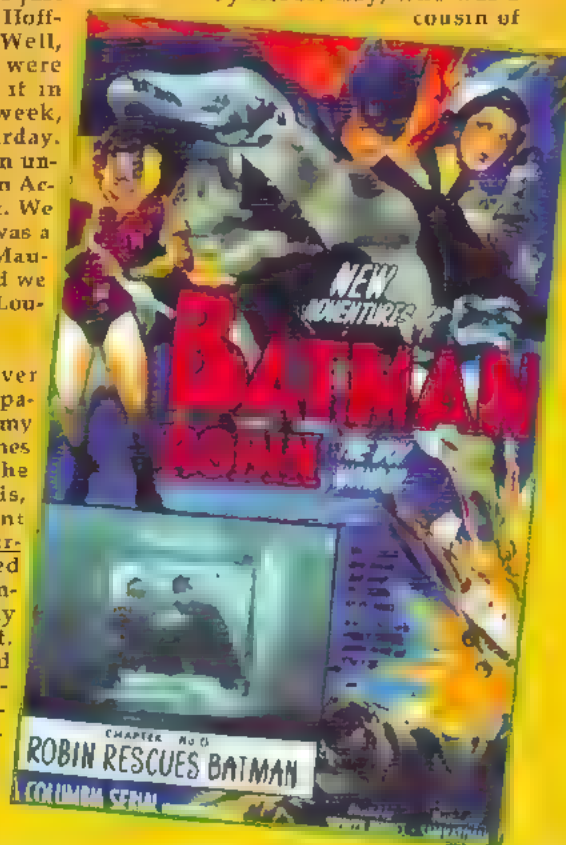
**LT:** Yes! No tits! (Laughs) They called her No Tits.

**SS:** *THE THIRTEENTH GUEST* and *A SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT* were basically photographed stage plays.

**LT:** No, it was more of an extension than that; it wasn't that static. If there were exteriors they'd go out on location. Cobwebs were a big thing to use in mysteries I mean. In *THE THIRTEENTH GUEST*, there was this one room where the guests had sat, but nobody had been in this old house for a long time. The prop man had this gadget that made cobwebs; it had a latex kind of thing that they'd spray and he'd have to go in and cobweb the place. It would get all over our clothes and be an absolute mess! (Laughs)

**SS:** *A SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT* was your second and last film with Ginger Rogers.

**LT:** We played reporters. We were rivals, although we were supposedly in love with each other. It was directed by Albert Ray, who was a cousin of





PAGE 56: Clark Kent (Kirk Alyn) and Lois Lane (Noel Neill) get the scoop on criminal mastermind Lex Luthor (Lyle Talbot) in *ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN* (1950). LEFT: Mae West and Talbot share a private moment together in *GO WEST YOUNG MAN* (1936). RIGHT: Ginger Rogers and Talbot (accompanied by the law) find the table set for 13 in *THE THIRTEENTH GUEST* (1932).

Charlie Ray, the actor. He worked quite a lot, because he could shoot them fast. He could make them in six days and that was it. They were B pictures, but some of them were very good. As a matter of fact, *THE THIRTEENTH GUEST* and *SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT* were the first two pictures sold to television, because they were owned by an independent; they weren't owned by the major studios who wouldn't sell their pictures originally. The majors were afraid of television; they wanted no part of it. It wasn't until they came on hard times—like Paramount, whose pictures were bought by MCA. That was the thing that made MCA all their millions. They bought the Paramount pictures and sold them to television. That's how MCA became what it is today.

SS: You certainly made a lot of mysteries in the early days.

LT: Oh, yes! I even did a picture with Vinnie Price in the fifties—a real hor-

ror thing called *THE MAD MAGICIAN*. I knew Vinnie Price forever, it seems. I used to see him around Hollywood at parties regularly and in New York in radio. I worked with him on *CHAMPAGNE FOR CAESAR*, in which he just stole the film from right under everybody's nose. Vincent was a great comedian if given the chance and that film proved it once and for all. I worked a day on the 3-D film *THE MAD MAGICIAN*, which was a followup to *HOUSE OF WAX*, just to say hello. It didn't do as well as the first one. That whole process was a fad. I ran into him at Warners one afternoon and he was very down because he'd lost the lead in the latest 3-D—they wound up casting Karl Malden instead!

SS: That was *PHANTOM OF THE RUE MORGUE*.

LT: Vinnie was the great star of 3-D horror and they passed him over. No accounting for executive stupidity! Vinnie was a great man to know and

just about everybody who worked with him felt the same.

SS: What was Hollywood like when they were making so many low-budget mysteries?

LT: There was an entirely different attitude towards picture-making in those days. Whatever they might have said about the Harry Cohns, the Louis B. Mayers, and the Warner Brothers—they were dedicated to making good pictures. That was the whole idea, even with so-called B pictures. They were only made because they had to balance it off with whatever the expensive pictures were, so they'd get a story that they could shoot in a shorter period of time. They had good people making B pictures. For instance, I made a film called *MURDER IN THE CLOUDS* in 1934. It was written by Dore Schary, who went on to produce a lot of big-budget films in the forties and fifties and actually became the head of MGM after Mayer. Warners used to bring out these writers and they were called jun-

LEFT: Lyle Talbot poses with the cast and crew of *GLEN OR GLENDA* (1953). Identifiable are Tim Farrell, Edward D. Wood, Talbot, William Thompson, Dolores Fuller, George Weiss, Henry Hederski, Conrad Brooks, and Scott McCloud. RIGHT: Ronald Colman, Barbara Britton, Vincent Price, Art Linkletter, and Lyle Talbot starred in the bubbly *CHAMPAGNE FOR CAESAR* (1950).





*"Ed Wood said, 'I don't have much money, Lyle, and I know you get a pretty big salary—but I'll give you just as much as I can.' It amounted to \$300 a day. He said, 'So that you know I'll pay you, I'll pay you every day.' I think we made GLEN OR GLENDA in five days, and he'd have the money in the morning. It was all a lot of ones and five-dollar bills and it was pretty crumpled, but he'd hand me this money."*

ior writers; the studio would put them in a little office. Bryan Foy, who had been one of the Seven Little Foys, was a producer. He'd read the newspaper and see what was going on, and he'd have them write a picture about some current event. MURDER IN THE CLOUDS was about smuggling. I played the character of Three Star Halsey. The guy who doubled me was Paul Mantz, a famous flier. His last film was THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX with Jimmy Stewart. He said, "I'll fly one more low one for them." They said they didn't need it, but he did it anyway and crashed. Anyway, he doubled me in MURDER IN THE CLOUDS. The picture was with Ann Dvorak and the flying in it was just great! It was made in something like two weeks.

SS: In 1935, you made a movie called CHINATOWN SQUAD.

LT: I played the driver of a Chinatown sightseeing bus in San Francisco—which was on the back lot at Universal, of course. (Laughs) They had a Chinatown set with narrow streets and a lot of Chinese extras. One day the director said to me, "Gee, Lyle, if you could drive this bus I could actually see you and I wouldn't have to use the double. Can you drive?" And I said, "Well, sure!" So I got in the bus and drove down this narrow street and I almost killed about six Chinese! The director yelled, "Lyle, get the hell out of there; you're going to kill my whole cast!"

SS: Here's a film with a strange title for 1936—TRAPPED BY TELEVISION.

LT: That was with Mary Astor. The picture was made long before anybody knew anything about TV or that there even was such a thing. I played the guy who invented it and I caught the villain in the picture. I liked working with Mary, and the interesting thing is that Mary was having a romance at the time with the famous playwright, George Kaufman. She'd kept a diary and the press had gotten hold of it. It was in all the newspapers. When TRAPPED BY TELEVISION came out, some guy who had a little movie theater over on the East Side in New York changed the title to TRAPPED BY A DIARY! (Laughs) Mary and Columbia Pictures raised hell! They made him change it back!

SS: Let's hear some more about Hollywood in the thirties.

LT: Each studio was a kingdom unto itself. Each one had its number of players, we had probably 60 actors un-

der contract at Warners. We were all called stars. You weren't a movie actor—you were a movie star. You practically lived at the studio; it was like your home. You had your own dressing room and your own chairs with your name on them. If there were any personal things that had to be taken care of—like when you got a traffic ticket, and probably up to murder—the studio would take care of it. You knew everybody. For instance, Warners had all the Busby Berkeley Girls under contract, and you'd date the chorus girls. There was always a big dinner at the Coconut Grove or somewhere for the Academy Awards. Jack Warner liked me personally and I'd be a guest at his table. The awards would be given out and they'd announce them over the radio.

SS: Any particular anecdotes?

LT: I remember when Warners Bros. made a picture called I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG. Robert E. Burns, who wrote the book and who actually escaped from a chain gang, was hired and stayed at the studio. They tried to extradite him to Georgia, but he was hidden out on the lot! (Laughs) He was protected right there at Warners.

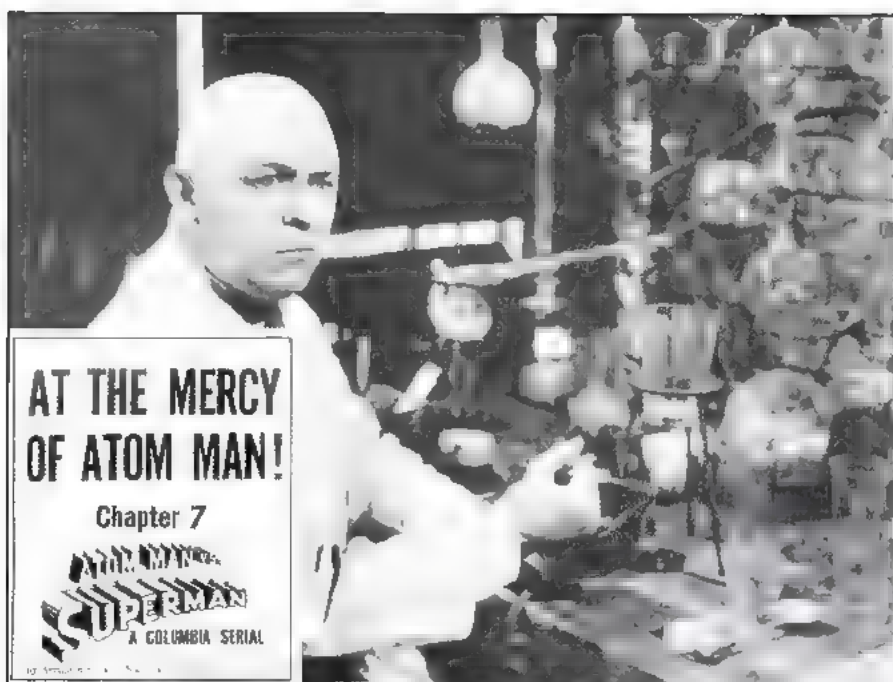
SS: You made GO WEST YOUNG MAN with the great Mae West.

LT: I actually met Mae West in 1929 in New York, when my agent sent me over to audition for her play SEX. It had already been done on Broadway, but the authorities closed it and she was arrested and served time on Welfare Island for immorality. New York was going through a morality phase at the time and the play was considered too much. Looked at to-

day, it's about as immoral as SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS! (Laughs) Anyway, she cashed in on it. She lived on Welfare Island and had her own beautiful cell and got a lot of publicity. So about two years later, Chicago and everywhere else was clamoring for SEX so she decided to do it again. They were casting it in New York. I was brand new from Nebraska; there was still a lot of corn in me, even though I'd been in the business in little Midwestern plays for years. My agent sent me over to audition. Mae was sitting out in the au-

dience watching us; there were about 10 of us up for it—all young guys auditioning for the role of a sailor. The play took place on the waterfront and she played a madam





**TOP LEFT:** Crackpot scientist Lex Luthor (Lyle Talbot) plots to destroy the Man of Steel in *ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN*, a Columbia serial based loosely on episodes of radio's *THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN*. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The ever-dapper Talbot and wife Bunny pose with interviewer David Del Valle in 1983.

seducing all these young men. I was supposed to be a seductee. Anyway, she was sitting with Jim Timony, who was her manager in those years. He was a famous attorney who'd been disbarred for some reason or another, but he was a wonderful guy and he handled all her business. She also had a stage manager whom she picked up in England. He had a cockney accent and he knew all of Mae's lines. I was very serious, I needed a job and there was this guy playing Mae West's part with a cockney accent! And it's a seduction scene! (Laughs) I was holding the script, reading the lines, and he had his arm around me because that's the way it was in the scene. Finally it was down to four or five guys and I was one of them, and I had to play the scene with the great Mae West. Well, it was too much for a guy from Nebraska. I could hardly wait to get the hell out of there! My agent wanted to know what happened and I lied to him. I said, "Oh, I don't think she liked me, Mr. Brown. Besides, I gotta go back home to Nebraska; my mother is very sick." So I hid out for about a week or so, and then I called and said, "Well, I'm back in town, Mr. Brown." And he said, "Oh, gee, you're too late. Miss West wanted you for the play, but they're already headed for Chicago."

**SS:** So you lost the part

**LT:** But I was glad to be out of it. Now, then, years passed and Mae West was a big star in movies. My agent called me and said, "Mae West wants you for her new picture. She's making a picture independently with Manny Cohen." He was head of Paramount and had formed his own company with

Mae and Bing Crosby and Gary Cooper. They were going to make films at an independent studio

**SS:** In 1936? *Amazing!*

**LT:** I said, "Do I go over for an interview?" and he said, "Oh, no, it's all set; she wants you." So there I was playing this scene with her. We're out on a balcony and they were taking a long time lighting, so we were talking and she's being very nice. She never remembered me from that audition in New York. I was just one of many and it was many years before. So I figured one day I'd tell her this story, because now I was sure of myself; I'm comfortable and secure and not in awe of her. So I told her the story and she died; she thought it was the funniest thing she ever heard. She said, "You don't feel that way about me now, do you?" And I said, "Of course I'm not afraid of you. You're terrific!" She said, "I tell you what. In this scene we've got, the hell with the little dialogue we have. Let's you and I just look at each other and mumble our lines. Let them imagine what we're saying." So they were getting ready to shoot and the sound man said, "I can't understand what they're saying!" And she said the hell with it! Henry Hathaway was the director. He was a tough guy, but he never got tough with Miss West. She was the boss, it was her picture and whatever she said went. So she said, "The hell with whether he hears us or not—roll 'em!" And that's the way the scene is in the picture!

**SS:** Were you under contract to most of the studios at one time or another?

**LT:** No, I free-lanced quite a bit. I actually was under contract only to two studios—Warner Bros. and Fox.

**SS:** Did you do much radio?

**LT:** I was on a series called *GRAND CENTRAL STATION*, and then I did *CALLING ALL CARS* for Rio Grande Gas. Then I did a series called *LINCOLN HIGHWAY*. The actual Lincoln Highway was the first so-called transcontinental all-surface highway. The Pennsylvania Turnpike was part of it—the turnpike that went from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia. The series *LINCOLN HIGHWAY* featured stories that took place along the highway.

**SS:** Kind of like *ROUTE 66* on television?

**LT:** Exactly!

**SS:** You played two famous comic-book characters in two famous Columbia serials: Commissioner James Gordon in *BATMAN AND ROBIN* and Lex Luthor in *ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN*.

**LT:** They made me wear a bald skull cap as Luthor. I always played Lex with total conviction as if he really existed, such characters must be for real if it's going to work for an audience. Kirk Alyn played Superman. Kirk had done very well for himself in the part, but he couldn't get a job after that. Nobody would give him a job; they thought he couldn't do anything else. He was such a nice guy. He and I used to trade recipes, he gave me a great recipe for stuffed cabbage. He was married at the time to Virginia O'Brien, who was famous for singing without changing her expression. She was known as the Frozen Face.

**SS:** Speaking of famous faces—you worked with some of the great horror stars

**LT:** I knew Lionel Atwill quite well. I worked with Lon Chaney Jr. in a number of films. I knew him quite well, too. I made a film called *ONE BODY TOO MANY* with Bela Lugosi—my friend Bela. Every time I smoke a pipe I think of Bela. He was learning to smoke a pipe and he used to come to me because he knew I smoked. He said, "Lyle, you got to make a big cake in there? They tell me you have to have a cake in the pipe?" (Laughs) There were two fellows—Bill Thomas and Bill Pine—and they were known as the Dollar Bills. They

*Continued on page 61*





# Lex Luthor Returns

When director Bryan Singer needed an actor to play the villainous Lex Luthor in *SUPERMAN RETURNS*, he turned to one of the usual suspects—specifically, Kevin Spacey, star of Singer's breakthrough film *THE USUAL SUSPECTS* (1995).

Luthor first hit the screen (with every weapon in his arsenal) in the Columbia chapterplay *ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN* (1950), played by veteran actor Lyle Talbot. The serial was inspired by a popular storyline on radio's *THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN* (1940). Over the airwaves, Atom Man wasn't Luthor in disguise, but a Nazi super-soldier powered by—what else?—kryptonite. (Radio's Atom Man was played by Mason Adams.)

Luthor first popped up in *Action Comics* #23 (1940) as a red-headed baddie, but within a year he had become the chrome dome we all love to loathe. Although Lex never sought the Man of Steel's destruction on television's *ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN* (1952-58), he later made a nuisance of himself on the live-action shows *SUPERBOY* (1989-92, played by Sherman Howard), *LOIS AND CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN* (1993-97, played by John Shea), and *SMALLVILLE* (2001, played by Michael Rosenbaum).

The character returned to the movies in *SUPERMAN* (1978), portrayed comically by a bewigged Gene Hackman and accompanied by henchpeople Miss Teschmacher (Valerie Perrine) and Otis (Ned Beatty). Hackman again took the role in *SUPERMAN II* (1980) and *SUPERMAN IV: THE QUEST FOR PEACE* (1987).

Now it's Kevin Spacey's turn to give Krypton's favorite son a (faster than a speeding bullet) run for his money.

—Richard Valley Kevin Spacey is the latest big-screen Lex Luthor in *SUPERMAN RETURNS*.



Steve Reeves provides a little beefcake in top-billed Lyle Talbot's office for the Edward D. Wood classic *JAIL BAIT* (1954).

## LYLE TALBOT

*Continued from page 60*

made pictures independently over at the Educational Studios for Paramount release. Bela played the butler in *ONE BODY TOO MANY* and he was wonderful. All through the picture he tries to serve the heirs coffee, and everybody either turns it down or doesn't drink it. Of course, the audience thinks it's poison and wonders who's going to get it. Finally, near the end of the picture, in disgust that nobody will drink his coffee, Bela drinks it himself—and it hasn't been poisoned at all. It was a great running gag. Bela was a wonderful guy, very sweet and soft spoken. He finally wound up in that stinker I did for Ed Wood.

SS: You did a number of Ed Wood films. In *GLEN OR GLENDA*, you were the police inspector who said, "This man is trapped in a woman's body—a woman's body is trapped in the mind of a man."

LT: I actually worked in two pictures for Eddie, but I wound up in four. He just used the film in anything that came along. That's how Bela wound up in *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*! (Laughs)

SS: How did you meet Ed Wood?

LT: Eddie's father was an executive of some kind with Universa, in New York. Eddie came in through his dad, who got him a job as assistant director at Universal. He was on a couple of pictures that I worked on, he was this young, eager-beaver type—very personable, very nice, very sweet guy.

He'd come to me—he used this same speech with the various actors that he afterwards used when he made pictures—and his pitch was, "You know, Lyle, you're one of my favorite actors." He was sincere about it; he meant it. He'd say, "Someday I'm going to make movies and when I do I want you to be in them." So what do you say? I was an actor who very seldom turned down anything, because I wanted to work. So consequently I worked in all kinds of pictures—good, bad, and indifferent. Anyway, I said, "Well, sure, Eddie, call me." Well, two or three years later I got a call from this Eddie Wood. I'd forgotten who he was, but he told me

and said he had this film he was to make and he had a great part for me. He said, "I don't have much money, Lyle, and I know you get a pretty big salary—but I'll give you just as much as I can." It amounted to \$300 a day. He said, "So that you know I'll pay you I'll pay you every day." I think we made *GLEN OR GLENDA* in five days, and he'd have the money in the morning. It was all a lot of ones and five-dollar bills and it was pretty crumpled, but he'd hand me this money (Laughs)

SS: He's become a cult figure.

LT: I feel the fans must be responding to the love and dedication Eddie had for the business, because even at his most absurd Ed Wood believed so much in what he was doing. And he worshipped actors like Bela!

SS: In *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*, you were an Army general.

LT: With stock Army footage! (Laughs) Eddie would do what they called "stealing shots." We were shooting at a motel on the Sunset Strip and he hadn't gotten an okay to do this. We were shooting around the pool when the manager came out and said, "What the hell is going on over here? You better get out!" So everyone—the cameramen who had worked for him before, and a couple of the electricians—they'd rush to get the hell out of there and go someplace else.

SS: So that was Ed Wood?

LT: That was Ed Wood. Ed made pictures on budgets that most people used to take a weekend vacation!



Left: Chris Randall, Jan Merlin, Dick Winters, and Kenny Miller look dangerous as young hoods who are **RUNNING WILD** (1955)—or, in this case, standing wild, which is much more difficult. Right: Cindy Robbins grooves to Kenny's bongo beat in **I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF** (1957). Unfortunately, producer Herman Cohen (busy, perhaps, hosting a Mr. Universe contest on his casting couch) later forgot to dub in the bongo sounds. **BOTTOM(S) LEFT:** Kenny followed the great Hollywood tradition of being photographed all over town with his date of the evening. Here it's Connie Stevens, who had hit it big as Cricket Blake on the TV series **HAWAIIAN EYE** (1959-63).

## KENNY MILLER

*Continued from page 51*

guys on the swim team. Tony was a very big stunt man for a while, too, but I don't know whatever became of him. He was a great guy, great looking, and he had the best sense of humor. I'm sure he eventually got married and probably has four kids now!

**SS:** *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF* was certainly an attention-getting title.

**KM:** When they put it in the trades that they were going to make a movie called *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF*, it was the most talked about movie for months, because of the unusual title. I was the first one to be cast, but I wasn't even sure I wanted to be in it! (Laughs) A guy by the name of Jerry Blain, who was a songwriter and actor, did want to be in the film but evidently I'd taken his part. Blain had written a song for the movie called "Eeny, Meeny, Miney, Mo," and he was very upset when he

found out that I was going to sing it instead of him. But I was more upset when I found out what they did with the song in the final cut. Now, this was a cheap film. Normally, when you sing a song you prerecord it with the orchestra and then you lip-sync to the playback. Well, they couldn't do that because they didn't have enough money. Darling little Cindy Robbins, who was playing my girlfriend in the movie, and I did a dance to the song. We had to count, but we had no music. When they scored the film they were also going to score the song. AIP had a showing at a theater in Hollywood for a bunch of kids. I was sitting in the back with Connie Stevens, Molly Bee, Burt Reynolds, Troy Donahue, and some other friends. The premiere was going great and then the scene came on where this guy says, "Hey, Vic has a new hit record out," referring to my character. So the music came on. Sounds great. Then I started singing and it was two measures out of sync. I thought I was gonna die! I just wanted to crawl under my seat. The kids were loving it, though; they didn't know the difference; it was rock 'n' roll. Herman Cohen was there and I said to him, "Herman, you are going to do something about this song, aren't you?" "Oh, sure we will," he says. Well, to this day that song has never been fixed! (Laughs) I was in Europe promoting another film and there was a theater in Paris showing *TEENAGE WEREWOLF*. I wanted to listen to all of us talking in French. It was funny because with the French dubbing I sounded like a frog when I talked and Michael Landon sounded gay. I think they got the voices mixed up there a little bit! Anyway, I figured they would also have redone the song in French. Well, it comes on and I hear the introduction and I thought,

"Oh, shit!" Evidently for foreign films they don't bother to rerecord the songs because it cost too much money. So the song was just as it always was—out of sync.

**SS:** *The song wasn't the only musical business that went wacky in that picture, was it?*

**KM:** That's right. In the film you see me playing the bongos, but because I didn't belong to the musicians union I couldn't actually play them. So, even though I had learned to play the bongos for this part, I had to just hit them on the rims. The plan was to bring in this great musician, Jack Costanza, who was to play the bongo and then have it dubbed into my scene. So in this scene, somebody, says to me, "Wow, Vic! You can really play those bongos!" Well, when you see the movie you don't even hear the bongos! They could n't afford to bring in Jack Costanza to record the bongo sound!

**SS:** *What about others in the cast?*

**KM:** Cindy Robbins played my girlfriend. She was the dearest person. We made *DINO* together, as well as *ROCKABILLY BABY*. We danced. No matter what the film was, we were always out there dancing, the two of us. Cindy and I became very close friends. She and a gal friend of hers named Susan Easter had both worked together on Broadway. Susan ended up playing my girlfriend in *GOING STEADY*, which is a film I did for Sam Katzman at Columbia. Cindy was just like she is on the screen—bubbly and sweet and so caring. She had been married and, I think, had a couple of little kids, but was divorced at the time we worked together. She later did a film with Rock Hudson called *THIS EARTH IS MINE* and was nominated for a Golden Globe. Unfortunately I've lost track of Cindy. We really enjoyed every minute working together. If I had to pick someone





to work with again, it would be Cindy Robbins.

SS: And Michael Landon?

KM: This was Michael's first film and he worked very hard and did a remarkable job. I didn't know until later what a great sense of humor he had. He loved playing practical jokes.

SS: Yvonne Lime had the female lead.

KM: I'd known Yvonne through a Hollywood Christian group. We had some mutual friends. We dated a bit—nothing serious or anything; we'd just go to various functions together. She lived in a little house out in Burbank. Sarah Buchner was a friend of hers and they did some shows overseas and eventually the two of them started Childhelp USA, which is a wonderful organization that helps abused children. Yvonne later married television producer Don Fedderson and raised a wonderful family. I always tried to have lunch with Yvonne whenever I was in Los Angeles, but now she lives in Arizona so I don't see her much. Yvonne was the most un-actorish actress around. Just the sweet girl next door. She loved to act and did it very well. I don't think she was dying to get the Oscar or anything, but she did enjoy performing.

SS: You mentioned DINO, which was with Sal Mineo and Brian Keith.

KM: DINO had been done as a television show originally broadcast on STUDIO ONE. It was such a big success that Allied Artists filmed it again as a feature film. I first met actress Susan Kohner while working on this film and we became very close over the years. It was a fun film. For some reason, Brian Keith was not very happy doing the film, however. DINO was a pretty successful movie. I played a character named Danny, but I don't remember what I did in the film! Oh wait, I do know—I danced with Cindy Robbins! (Laughs)

SS: What do you recall about Sal Mineo?

KM: The main thing I remember about Sal Mineo was that he was very withdrawn. When I worked with him he was still very young; I think he was only about 18 or so. His brother Mike was a complete flip and was Sal's guardian. Sal was very insecure. I got to know him a little bit through other people, but he was definitely never a social butterfly. In the early seventies, he was in a play down on La Cienega called FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES. The big thing about the play was that, in one scene, Sal was stark naked. Of course, that brought a lot of people in to see the play and Sal got tremendous reviews. A group of us decided to go and see the play one night. It was Connie Stevens and I, along with Robert Fuller and his wife, John Smith and Luana Patton, and Burt Reynolds and Judy Carne. Sal was told that we were there and he wouldn't go on stage. We talked to him later and he said, "When I do the show in front of an audience I don't know any of those people, as a

rule," but because he knew that his colleagues were there he couldn't go on. I thought that was very strange. I guess he was just intimidated about being nude in front of people he knew. Well, he had nothing to be ashamed of, believe me! (Laughs)

SS: In 1957, you also made ROCKABILLY BABY.

KM: ROCKABILLY BABY was Marlene Willis' first 20th Century Fox film after they put her under contract. Marlene and I became very close friends and she sang in this film. And, of course, we worked together the following year in ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE. Also cast in ROCKABILLY BABY were Irene Ryan and Ellen Corby, who played these two old busybody neighbors. The funny thing was that here were these two little old character actresses who you'd think would be on their last legs and years later they both went on to become two of the biggest TV stars around. So it just goes to show you that, no matter how old you get, there may still be something out there for you. Or at least that's what I keep telling myself! (Laughs)

SS: In 1958 you appeared with Molly Bee in GOING STEADY.

KM: That was about a group of kids in high school. The lead girl gets pregnant. It had a wonderful cast. Alan Reed Jr. played Molly's boyfriend, husband. I don't think he did too much after this film, but he was a very good. It was a cute film, but it was banned in many places because they thought the subject matter was too racy. We did a publicity tour and in Springfield, Ohio, my hometown, they refused to show it! They said it wasn't a film that young people should see! (Laughs)

SS: You were good friends with Molly Bee at this time, weren't you?

KM: Molly and I had gone together and then broken up, but we'd remained very good friends. Then we got to know Tommy Sands and we became like the three musketeers. Tommy and Molly went together for a while, too. Just before making GOING STEADY, Molly's mom contracted tuberculosis and had to go to a sanitarium. I was of age, but Molly and her two brothers weren't, so I stayed at the house to help out, and that was when Molly was cast in GOING STEADY. At the same time I went for an audition not knowing that Molly had already been cast. When I went for my interview, I heard Sam Katzman mention that Molly Bee was going to star. Of course, I didn't tell them that I was living with her! (Laughs) We had a great time on the film.

SS: Let's talk about ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE. What do you recall about producer/director Bert L. Gordon?

KM: He was quite a perfectionist. A nice, sweet man—sort of the old-school type in that he didn't give you too much direction as an actor. He would pretty much just run you through the paces and expect you to have done your

homework and to do what you were needed to do. He was a wonderful film director, but he wasn't really an actor's director. The biggest surprise to me—although I didn't actually work with her in the film—was little Susan Gordon, Bert's daughter. She was so young when she did this film, and there's quite a bit of dialogue in her scene, but she came across like such a little pro.

SS: On TOUCH OF EVIL, you worked with director Orson Welles.

KM: That film was one of the highlights of my life. Orson Welles wanted me to play one of a gang of Mexican juvenile delinquents. He decided that he wanted me to get a permanent so that I'd have curly hair for the role. He called over to the makeup people and had Bud Westmore come in. He told him that he wanted my hair to be curly and to have a D.A., a duck's ass! That was about two weeks prior to filming, so I was put under contract beginning that next day and had to be in the hair department to get the permanent. Well, it turned out to be the most awful looking thing! They had it cut and it took about six days or so for it to begin to look curly. I'm not sure what the obsession was with Orson Welles and that curly hair, but I didn't mind because I was getting paid good money during the whole time!

SS: You have a story of Welles taking you into the bad side of town.

KM: Chico Day, who was the assistant director on TOUCH OF EVIL, came to my dressing room one day and told me that Mr. Welles wanted to see me. I went to him and he asked me if I wanted to drive over to East LA and help him pick out extras for the film. I said "You're gonna go where and do what?" So there I went in a stretch limousine with Orson Welles and Chico Day. We drove on down to East LA, which was a pretty bad area back then. There were several Chicanos hanging around on a corner and we pulled up to them. Orson rolled down the tinted windows and said, "Excuse me, but would you like to be in a motion picture?" Well, they started swearing at us. Chico started talking to them in Spanish and calmed them down and made them realize that we weren't just trying to pick them up for porno or something! (Laughs)

SS: Orson Welles has a reputation as a tough director.

KM: He actually had a great sense of humor; he really was like a big teddy bear. A lot of people have the idea that he was very mean and always upset. The only time I ever saw him like that was when people hadn't prepared or when they were doing something that they shouldn't be doing. He had no time for that. One time that I did see Orson get upset was when one of the extras sat in his director's chair. Welles came back to

Continued on page 64



Of course you know, this means war! It's Kenny Miller in **BATTLE FLAME** (1959).

## KENNY MILLER

*Continued from page 63*

the set from a story conference or something and saw this kid in his chair. He went ballistic! He made them fire the kid. This extra didn't even realize what he'd done wrong. Evidently the story conference hadn't gone very well and that kid had just sat down in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**SS:** Cecil B. DeMille's **THE BUCCANEER** was another big-budget film for you.

**KM:** That's my other all-time favorite film. It starred Charlton Heston, Yul Brynner, and a star-studded cast. The greatest part was that it was directed by Anthony Quinn. At the dinner at Perino's, after the world premiere of the film, my date, Kathy Nolan, and I were lucky enough to sit at the table with Anthony, the DeMilles, and the Hestons. Tony reached over the table and announced, "Kenny, you're going to be in every film that I direct." Well, Anthony Quinn never directed another film! (Laughs)

**SS:** Did you enjoy working on the war film **BATTLE FLAME**?

**KM:** That one was another Allied Artists' production. I met Richard Harrison on the film. He later went to Europe and became a superstar over there making those gladiator movies. He and I became good friends. On the other hand, there was a young actor in **BATTLE FLAME** whom I was not too fond of, by the name of Robert Blake. I had known Robert off and on for some time and he must have been going through

his James Dean period. Scott Brady starred in the film and he was the greatest guy in the world. Allied Artists had no commissary, but there was this bar around the corner where Scott used to have lunch because he could also have a couple of drinks. Most of us would go there with him, but not Mr. Blake. He just never became a part of the group. It seemed like he really didn't give a rat's ass about any one of us, and he was rather rude to the director of the film, as well.

**SS:** In 1961, you made **LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME**, produced by Maury Dexter.

**KM:** I got to know Maury years before we ever made that film. I'll tell you a wonderful story about him. When I went into the service, I ended up at Camp Roberts for my basic training. The guys who had been over in Korea were discharged out of Camp Roberts and Maury Dexter was in special services there. He was bringing some performers up from Hollywood for a show—Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis were doing a magic act—and he needed somebody to help him in the office. He knew I'd been in Hollywood, so I worked with Maury while I was still in the infantry and awaiting my orders. He would sometimes take me and a couple of the other guys home with him to his mother's house. She was from Arkansas and a great cook. Maury had been an actor and had appeared on **THE HANK MCCUNE SHOW**. He eventually became an assistant director and then a director. When he ended up at 20th Century Fox, I worked with him on **LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME** and then a little later on **SURF PARTY**. In fact, I got him Jimmie Rodgers for **LITTLE SHEPHERD**. They had wanted some sort of pop singer for the lead and they couldn't get person they originally wanted. Jimmie had never done a film before. He and his first wife, Colleen, were close friends of mine.

**SS:** The rest of the cast was quite good, too.

**KM:** We also had Luana Patten and George Kennedy in the film. It was one of George's early films and he'd just chew up the scenery. He was the villain and he was great. George kept

saying to me, "Kenny, I am gonna be a big star in this business"—and by God if he didn't go and become one!

**SS:** We haven't touched on your TV work.

**KM:** I have good memories of my episode of **THE CISCO KID**. I played a young student named Jay Jones. I had several scenes with Leo Carrillo, who played Pancho. He was such a dear man and he was older than God, even then! I don't know what it is about Latin actors, but they really seem to like to wear makeup. We were shooting out in Calabasas in the desert and was it ever hot! Poor Leo was sweating and he had all that crap on his face, and his mascara was running. I was sure he even had false eyelashes! (Laughs) He really was a great guy.

**SS:** You've met so many fascinating people during your career.

**KM:** That has really been the exciting thing in my life, more so than the films I've done. And I have been so lucky. I would have liked to have been more successful in many respects, career wise. It's too bad that I wasn't born about 12 years earlier so that I could have been in those wonderful MGM musicals. I was just a little too late for that, although I did get to sing in four or five films. And I have had a wonderful singing career and appeared in some wonderful clubs all over the world. I've really had a great life and continue to do so. I've recently been invited to appear at some autograph and collectors conventions around the country, which is really a fun thing for me. It's a thrill to meet people who still want my autograph after all these years. It certainly makes me feel good inside and I thank God for the opportunity. With all of the things in life I wish I could have done, or probably shouldn't have done, I've had a great journey through the years. Appearing at these conventions with all those folks makes me smile to myself and say, "Miller, you must have done something right!"

*For a fascinating read, pick up Kenny's book **Kenny Miller: Surviving Teenage Werewolves, Puppet People and Hollywood** (McFarland & Co., 1999)*

## BERT I. GORDON

*Continued from page 37*

**BIG:** I never ended up with the needle. Too bad—I could use it now and then like that scene in **THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN**. (Laughs) I kept the dragon from **THE MAGIC SWORD** for a long time, but I couldn't put my two cars in the garage. I kept it for years and years, but I finally got rid of it. I kept one of the rat heads from **THE FOOD OF THE GODS**, which was used in closeups when a rat would bite or chew someone's arm off.

**SS:** You actually made two versions of H. G. Wells' **The Food of the Gods**. The first was called **VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS**.

**BIG:** I'd optioned the Wells story and tried for three years to lick the story

and get a deal on it. The book was very episodic, with a rambling narrative. Finally I had a meeting with Joe Levine of Embassy Pictures and I pitched a few ideas. When he heard the name H. G. Wells, he decided to go with it, and it wound up with the title **VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS**.

**SS:** You had some young actors in that film who were on their way up and some who were on the outs. For instance, the star, Tommy Kirk, had been fired by Disney.

**BIG:** Tommy was just fine in the film; there wasn't any drinking or other problems. I enjoyed working with him very much. Ron Howard was in the film, too, and so was his father. And we had Beau Bridges and Johnny Crawford. It was a good cast.

**SS:** Then, in the seventies, you made a new version with the original Wells title.

**BIG:** And I wound up working again with Sam Arkoff. I still hadn't been able to crack the story to my satisfaction, but finally I reworked it and had it storyboarded. I filmed one scene and on the strength of that made the picture. Sam didn't think I'd be able to put the giant rats on the screen, but I'd already filmed tests of the rodents, and when I showed him the footage, he said, "We have a deal."

**SS:** You had one of Hollywood's great stars in the film—Ida Lupino. **PICTURE MOMMY DEAD** had a good cast, too.

**BIG:** Don Ameche was very good and very nice to work with in that film. I had Zsa Zsa Gabor, too, but actually I had



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first cast Hedy Lamarr for the part. She was all set. Then, about a week before shooting, she was arrested for shoplifting. The film was supposed to be her comeback. She was all excited about it, but unfortunately it didn't happen.

**SS:** So you got Zsa Zsa Gabor. Like Orson Welles, she was famous for being difficult.  
**BIG:** Well, she wasn't difficult except at the very beginning, on the first day. It was lunch time, and we were filming at the Doheny Estate, which was called The Castle. It was another mansion you could rent out to do a film. Anyway, Zsa Zsa was up in her bedroom. She wanted her lunch and she wanted to eat it in her room. I had my assistant director take food up to her. He opened the door, and on the tray was her lunch on a paper plate. Well, she took the paper plate and threw it on the floor. She said, "Zsa Zsa does not eat on paper plates! You go tell the director I'm not coming down on the set until I see my director!" So, I went up to her room and walked through the door and, before she had a chance to say anything, I said, "Zsa Zsa, you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen." She threw her arms around me and purred, "My director!"—and that was the end of that! (Laughs)

**SS:** And she got real plates from then on?

**BIG:** Of course—and after that she was really nice.

**SS:** What's your favorite of your films?

**BIG:** Well, I tell you the truth when I say I enjoyed making all of them. My favorite film, though, is always my next one. I've got a new project in the works.

**SS:** That's terrific! How about one last story? There was another actress famous for demanding the star treatment—Joan Collins.  
**BIG:** Oh, yes! We went to Florida to make *EMPIRE OF THE ANTS*.

**SS:** This was pre-DYNASTY, of course.

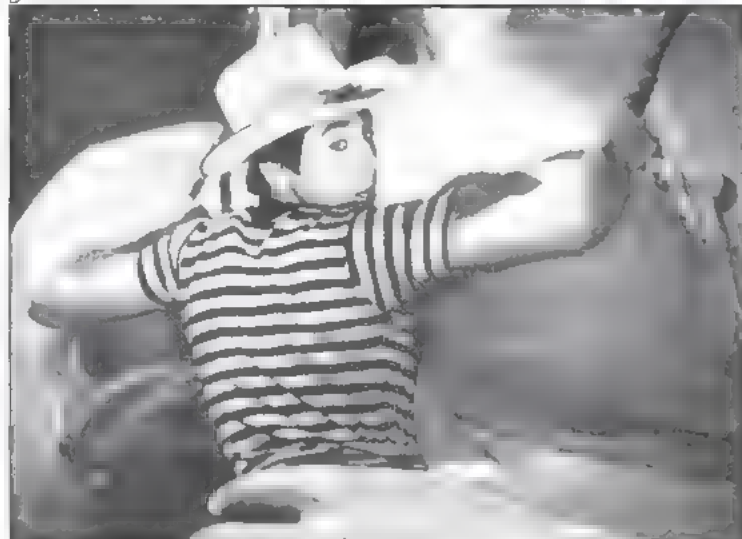
**BIG:** Okay.

**SS:** (Laughs) Just okay?

**BIG:** (Laughs) Okay, I'll tell you one story. We're on a river in the center of Florida. It's like Africa, it's beautiful, with overhanging vines. There are alligators every where. They didn't get paid; they just wanted to watch. Well, the scene called for the boat tipping over and Joan going into the water. She said, "There's no way in hell I'm going in the water with those things all around." I talked and talked to her, but I couldn't persuade her. I said, "Look, I have eight grips, all in diving

suits out of camera range, to keep the alligators away from you." She said, "It's not going to happen. I'm just not going to do it." Finally I told her to relax and I'd think of something. I walked over to the cameraman and I said, "When I look your way, roll your camera." Well, anyway, she went into the water with a little "help." It wasn't exactly nice of me, but we had to do it. We got the shot.

In 1965, Bert I. Gordon titillated his audience with *VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS*. Johnny Crawford wasn't the first teenager to get busted in the sixties—but he was the first to get busted like this!



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**MILL OF THE STONE WOMEN**

TECHNICAL

**FURY OF ACHILLES** (1956) Gordon Mitchell Jacques Design  
Gemma Miliand The epic story of the Trojan Achilles with military results in idea of leading an attack on the fortified city eventually leads the victory over the established Trojans. Has some epic battles some re-actors sequences. (Betwixt come from 1956)







**I** never expected to become a great actor, but some how it happened.

Darren McGavin, a great favorite of Scarlet Streeters who died at the age of 84 on February 25 of this year, had been cast as an alien in earthly disguise for the 1989 "Portrait of the Artist" episode of the TV series *MONSTERS*. The crew was excited that Carl Kolchak, The Night Stalker himself, would be the guest star of the week. Kolchak—usually the one catching the monsters—would be one just this once.

But how did I become a great actor—specifically, a great actor named Darren McGavin? At the episode's climactic moment, when McGavin tore off his human face to reveal his true four-eyed self, it was really me standing in for the star under eight pounds of facial prosthetics!

They say that it can be hard to walk in another man's shoes—but to actually wear his skin? Hannibal Lecter may know the feeling, but it was all new to me.

Because McGavin was constantly needed onset for his scenes in human form, it was necessary to have someone else stand in for his monster shots. I volunteered to do double-duty as both the special makeup artist for the episode and stand-in for the star's alien alter-ego. The series producer, Jan Saunders, was thrilled that she wouldn't have to hire an additional actor.

The big effect came at the end of the episode: a gelatin Darren McGavin face was ripped off revealing a foam latex alien visage complete with pointy dentures. While I was prepped for four hours in the makeup chair, McGavin was on the set giving his usual "Cagneyesque," fully committed, high energy performance. Off the set, though, McGavin was quiet, and often seemed tired. He saved all of his energy for the rolling cameras.

I was led to the set blind and oxygen deprived, where I was told that I would have to lip-sync McGavin's prerecorded dialogue. ("They're telling me this now?" I thought). We shot each set-up twice, each take followed a brief lip-sync re-

hearsal. The face tear reveal effect went well the first time we shot it (it's the take seen in the episode), but the makeup crew reattached the face hiding the torn areas with morticians wax, so that a second "safety" take could be recorded.

Penetrating my discomfort and exhaustion were jolts of adrenaline and the excitement of a recurring thought: "I'm speaking with Kolchak's voice!" It wasn't *THE NIGHT STALKER*, of course, but there was a monster and there was Darren McGavin—it seemed close enough.

Darren McGavin's screen characters recall D. W. Griffith's famous insight on acting, which he made to Lillian Gish: "What you get is a living, what you give is life." McGavin made Carl Kolchak so alive, so real, that *THE NIGHT STALKER* survives even the passing of his creator, still fighting monsters and making it safe for the rest of us on TV, in DVD box sets, in comics, and in the pages of new Night Stalker anthologies.

Being Darren McGavin was hard work then, but a great memory now. If *MONSTERS* asked me to do it all over again, I would race to be there.

Doubletime . . .



**RIGHT:** John Dods had a face-off with Darren McGavin (TOP) on the TV series *MONSTERS*.



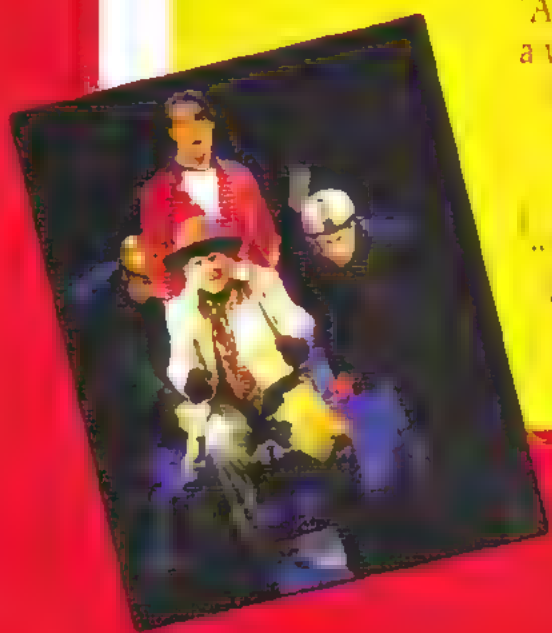
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PRESENTS



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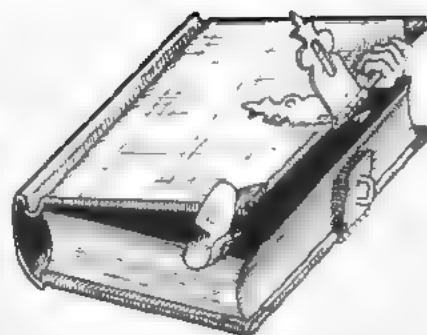
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# Book Ends

## The Scarlet Street Review of Books



### TAB HUNTER CONFIDENTIAL

*Tab Hunter with Eddie Muller*  
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005  
378 pages—\$24.95

If you want to read a movie star biography about a gay performer you usually have two options: wait until the person in question is dead and someone else can uncover the facts; or hope that the celebrity no longer is worried about maintaining a "safe" image, has gotten comfortable with who he or she really is, and is willing to be up front about the truth.

Happily, we didn't have to wait until Tab Hunter took the big sleep to get his story. Tab himself has published *Tab Hunter Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star*, a pretty thorough, well-written (in collaboration with Eddie Muller), honest, and fascinating account of his life in the cruellest of businesses. Hunter wins you over by asking you to read his entire book and not just skip through it, looking for the scandalous or salacious bits. Take him up on this request, by all means, because you'll be amply rewarded. You'll find yourself understanding exactly what it is like to be turned into a commodity because of your good looks, the unreality of being the Hollywood "flavor of the month," the nastiness of tabloid reporting, and the struggle to keep getting work and hold on to some degree of dignity once the spotlight has been turned elsewhere.

Tab Hunter and Roddy McDowall pose for the world's campiest publicity photo.



The book has that same easygoing affability that Hunter always possessed onscreen, but the author doesn't shy away from calling a spade a spade when he believes certain people have been unjust, unkind, or unfair. (If you don't want to hear Tallulah Bankhead getting admonished for being self-involved and rude, this might not be the book for you.) This is not one of those autobiographies in which the performer appears deluded or bitter, or doesn't bother to get the facts right. On the contrary, Hunter not only seems to accept his position in show business history but remembers events with incredible accuracy, backing up even the most questionable stories by reproducing pertinent photos, ads, and articles of the time.

He gives famed casting couch agent Henry Willson his due (and insists that no, he never slept with him as most of Willson's male clients were required to do), speaks fondly of co-star and friend Natalie Wood, and confirms that he and Anthony Perkins were indeed a couple (though the relationship never worked out the way he had hoped). Amid less interesting passages on his lifelong obsession with horses, Hunter also speaks with emotional candor of the relationships he had hoped to build with several men before finding happiness with his current partner, Allan Glaser, a studio executive he met in the early eighties.

— Even if you think little of Tab Hunter beyond his looks (and the cover photo alone proves that he was, indeed, one of the most gorgeous men to ever step in front of a camera), you'll find yourself enjoying this book tremendously.

—Barry Monush

### 'SALEM'S LOT

Stephen King  
Doubleday, 2005  
594 pages—\$35.00

Good old 'Salem's Lot! The 1975 novel is regarded as either Stephen King's scariest or second scariest novel, running neck-and-neck with *The Shining* (1977), depending on which poll you read. The book has rightfully taken its place along other great vampire novels of the 20th century such as Richard Matheson's seminal *I Am Legend* (1954) and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). Late last year, Doubleday published a beautiful new hardcover edition of this tale of a not

so nice little village in Maine and the Dracula-like new inhabitant drawn there by old (but unforgettable) scandal and intrigue. This volume is advertised as the "Illustrated Edition;" accordingly, several surreal (and, alas, only tangentially related to the text) black-and-white photographs by Jerry N Uelsmann have been sprinkled throughout, and also grace the book's front and back cover.

Why, then, is this edition a must have? Well, it boasts a wonderfully redesigned text with a thoughtful new introduction by the author, and a somewhat less new introduction from a few editions ago, appended as an afterword. Also, King's related short stories, the early, Lovecraftian "Jerusalem's Lot" (unpublished until the collection *Night Shift*, 1978) and the later miniserial to the novel itself, "One for the Road" (1977), have also been included.

However, the bonanza here is the 51 pages of deleted material, comprising both bits from various drafts and sections cut from the completed novel. These selections, with their many differences (including the original and infamous death by rat attack for one heroic but hapless character) are exciting reading for anyone fascinated by the creative process. But more than that, viewing this material brought back some of the breathless dread I felt that long-ago late Sunday afternoon when I stepped into the darkness of 'Salem's Lot, while my family was away on vacation and I was home all alone. ("Alone," King writes, "yes, that's the key word, the most awful word in the English tongue.") I emerged in the dark, wee hours of Monday morning a very frightened lad, indeed. The pull of 'Salem's Lot, like that of the novel's ruined and haunted Marsten House, remains palpable to this day.

Mr. King, might I suggest next time around you authorize some terrific graphic novel team to adapt 'Salem's Lot? I know I'd brave any crucifix or even the purifying light of day to obtain a truly illustrated version of your tale.

—Bob Gutowski

### MOVIES MADE FOR TELEVISION

Alvin H. Marill  
Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005  
2,168 pages—\$300  
*Scarlet Street* contributor Alvin H. Marill has found something interest-



ing to do in his spare time—compiling a list of almost 5,500 telefilms for a five-volume set of books titled *Movies Made for Television: 1964-2004*.

Ever since Leonard Maltin (who offers a foreword for Marill's work) dispensed with including TV movies in his annual movie guides, there's been a need for something like *Movies Made for Television*. Now, it's possible at last to—for example—attain information about the fun series of Perry Mason films produced from the mid-eighties (1985's *PERRY MASON RETURNS*) through the early nineties (1993's *PERRY MASON: THE CASE OF THE KILLER KISS*). Once again fans can revisit such forgotten gems as *THE CAT CREATURE, ISN'T IT SHOCKING*, and *FRANKENSTEIN: THE TRUE STORY* (all 1973), and such memorable campfests as *ALEXANDER: THE OTHER SIDE OF DAWN* and *TERRACES* (both 1977).



You've got to be a football hero to get along with a beautiful boy. Leigh McCloskey and Alan Feinstein trade a few passes in *ALEXANDER: THE OTHER SIDE OF DAWN* (1977).

Volumes One through Four cover 1964-79, 1980-89, 1990-99, and 2000-2004 respectively, with Volume Five providing an index for actors, directors, books and plays adapted as telefilms,

and each title. It's splendid work and deserves to find a place on the book shelves of every film scholar and historian.

—Richard Valley

#### LIVE FAST, DIE YOUNG Lawrence Frascella and Al Weisel

A Touchstone Book, 2005  
372 pages—\$24.95

Of all the books about Hollywood that have recently seen publication, the only one I can recommend without reservation is *Live Fast, Die Young: The Wild Ride of Making Rebel Without a Cause*, by Lawrence Frascella and Al Weisel.

Over half a century after it hit theater screens, *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE* (1955) remains the teen angst film against which all others are measured. In addition to a detailed history of the film's genesis, production, and legacy, there is much in the book that's remarkable. That includes questioning whether star James Dean's relationship with starlet Pier Angeli was mostly publicity, casting into doubt just about everything Dennis Hopper, who appeared with Dean in *REBEL* and *GIANT* (1956), has said about Dean's sex life in the last three or four decades. Fifty-plus years after Dean's death, it's well past time to question whether he had intimate sexual relations with men. He did. It's past time that we blithely accept Dean's relationship with Angeli as genuine while just as blithely dismissing any gay relationship as calculating and career driven, even—perhaps especially—on the questionable testimony of Dean's friends and



Judy (Natalie Wood) has eyes for Jim (James Dean), but Jim has eyes for Plato (Sal Mineo) in *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE* (1955)

associates. (Hopper won't admit that Dean ever had any gay relationships under any circumstances.)

The authors also find amazing evidence that *REBEL* director Nicholas Ray once considered filming a scene in which classmates Jim Stark (Dean) and Plato (Sal Mineo) kiss, and show up *REBEL* cast member Nick Adams as something of a blackmailing, opportunistic creep.

The book contains detailed interviews with *REBEL*'s surviving cast and crew (among them Hopper, Corey Allen, Beverly Long, and Jack Grinnage), and includes quotes from *Scarlet Street*'s interview with Ann Doran (SS #17). The veteran actress played Jim's mother in the film and became something of a mother figure for Dean after the cameras stopped rolling.

*Live Fast, Die Young: The Wild Ride of Making Rebel Without a Cause* is Hollywood history as it should be—with both feet out of the closet. It's a valuable document about a still-vital motion picture.

—Drew Sullivan

## SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

Continued from page 31

### THE NEW AVENGERS

A & E Home Entertainment—\$79.95

Hitting British airwaves just in time for the spy craze started by the James Bond films in the early sixties, *THE AVENGERS* enjoyed a wildly successful eight year run (1961-69.) Each week Special Agent John Steed (Patrick Macnee) and his partner—there were several during the run, with Cathy Gale (Honor Blackman) and Emma Peel (Diana Rigg) being the most popular—thwarted, with tongue firmly in cheek, megalomaniacs or mad scientists who were usually intent on ruling the world.

Seven (10 for American viewers) years after the last episode of the original series Steed returned, this time with two partners in tow—Mike Gambit (Gareth Hunt) and Purdey (Jo-

anna Lumley.) They were *THE NEW AVENGERS* (1976-77). The revival only lasted two seasons and this box set contains all 13 episodes of the first on four discs.

Unjustly maligned by many fans, these episodes are mediocre at the very worst with others rising nearly to the level of the original run. The main problem is that the various backers' conflicting desires forced original producers Albert Fennel and Brian Clemens (who also wrote eight episodes) to pull the show in too many directions. While still retaining some of the humor of the originals, mostly in the form of witty interplay between our three heroes, the episodes lean towards straightforward espionage adventure tales. They are often exciting, yes, but they rarely reach the outrageous heights of the Emma Peel era. "Eagle's Nest," about killer monks and guest starring Peter Cushing; "Faces," with both Purdey and Gambit posing as their

own imposters; and "Gnaws," about something big lurking in the London sewer system; are choice episodes. It also doesn't hurt that Macnee, Hunt, and Lumley all seem to be enjoying themselves. Returning composer Laurie Johnson helps retain some of the *AVENGERS* flavor, his scoring up to his usual standards (except for the tacky reworking of the title theme.)

A&E's DVD presentation is mostly satisfying, but lacks extras—offering only stills galleries. Several episodes have faded color, but most look nice and crisp, with good sound. While not necessarily essential viewing for fans of the original show, *THE NEW AVENGERS* is a pleasant time killer.

—Ron Morgan

### THE FLASH

Warner Home Video—\$59.98

An unfortunate flash in the pan was the 1990 TV series *THE FLASH*, starring

Continued on page 82



**M**urder Madness. Mayhem Mercenary men, malicious molls, and malignant minions. If you're a true fan of film noir, then these are a few of your favorite things! The Golden Age of Film Noir on the silver screen may have occurred some 50-plus years ago, but there is no denying that the Golden Age of Noir on home video is happening right now. In just the last year or so, many long-neglected and half-forgotten treasures are finally seeing the light of day (oops, bad analogy, that!) thanks to the efforts of a new wave of individuals and companies dedicated to restoring, preserving, and releasing these classic films on DVD.

Chief among these emerging leaders is 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, which has finally mined its underground film storage vault in Kansas and unearthed a trove of dark gems, releasing them three per quarter under the banner of the Fox Film Noir collection. The most recent trio is a particularly provocative group, and includes Otto Preminger's *Fallen Angel* (1945), Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *NO WAY OUT* (1950), and Robert Wise's *THE HOUSE ON TELEGRAPH HILL* (1951).

*FALLEN ANGEL* (20th Century Fox, \$14.98) is one of the most unjustly neglected of the classic Fox noirs. Alternately vilified as the film that drove a legendary star off the screen and unfairly dismissed as a pale imitation of a better film, Preminger's moody whodunit is ripe for rediscovery. The film reunited the producer-director with many of the Fox contract talents who had made significant

stylistic contributions to his 1944 masterpiece, *Laura* (Fox, \$14.98) cinematographer Joseph LaSalle, art directors Lyle R. Wheeler and Jeland Fuller, costumer Bonnie Cashin, composer David Raksin, and actors Dana Andrews and Dorothy Adams. But despite the commonalities in cast and crew, the two films are scarcely comparable in story or milieu.

The plot of *FALLEN ANGEL* concerns Eric Stanton (Andrews), a drifter who turns up in the tiny oceanside community of Walton, California, where he becomes smitten with sultry café hostess Stella (Linda Darnell). Stella is a brunette beauty who's been around the block more than once, and is wasting for a ticket out of town. She's not particular, and has several local men vying for her favors, waiting for one of them to come up with the cash she believes can make her dreams come true. The unscrupulous Stanton hatches a plan: he'll marry wealthy, naive church pianist June Mills (Alice Faye), dip into her bank account, and then run away with Stella. Leaving his bride at home with her spinster sister, Clara (Anne Revere), on their wedding night, Eric pays a visit to Stella, has a fight with her, gets good and plastered, and becomes the prime suspect when Stella's lifeless body is found the next morning. Did he do it? Did June? Sister Clara? Or was it one of the victim's other admirers (played by Percy Kilbride and Bruce Cabot)? The hard-boiled detective assigned to the case (Charles Bickford) has his money on Stanton.

In addition to being a solid murder mystery, *FALLEN ANGEL* is an in-

triguing study in contrasts, as exemplified by leading ladies Faye and Darnell. Heroine Faye is perpetually bathed in light, her blonde hair a halo around her face, while Darnell often fades into deep shadows, her dark beauty accentuated by black clothing and oversized black lace hats. Faye is an innocent creature of the daylight; Darnell is unquestionably a denizen of the night. Both actresses give expert performances under Preminger's assured direction, although Darnell is intrinsically the more interesting character, at least during the first half of the film. After Stella has been bumped off, Faye's June Mills begins to undergo a perverse metamorphosis, as she is gradually exposed to the sinister side of life and transforms willingly into the fallen angel of the title. Still, audiences and critics responded more favorably to Darnell here giving her first "adult" performance at the age of 21, after having played bland ingénue roles since 1939. True, Faye retired from the screen for 17 years after viewing the film, reportedly angry that some of her scenes were trimmed, but she nonetheless is shown to advantage in the final cut.

Fox's DVD presentation of *FALLEN ANGEL* is superb, featuring a gorgeous transfer and a wealth of extras, including the original trailer and a wonderful selection of scene stills, production photographs, and advertising materials. Best of all is the engaging commentary by film historian Eddie Muller (he's joined by Susan Andrews, Dana's daughter, who not only shares many fascinating insights into her father's life and acting career, but makes many keen observations about films in general and *FALLEN ANGEL* in particular. The commentary alone makes this DVD a definite "must have."

Linda Darnell offers an even finer, albeit less showy, performance in Mankiewicz's *NO WAY OUT* (Fox, \$14.98). Personally produced by studio chief Darryl F. Zanuck, the film was advertised as strictly "adult" fare. Far from being a publicist's hype, the label is still valid today. A tough, gritty noir that explores racism in America, *NO WAY OUT* is filled with incendiary dialogue—including racist epithets—and situations that must have shocked post-WWII audiences. In fact, it's hard to imagine how this film managed to slide past the Hays Office back in 1950. More than half a century later, its raw power is startling in an era in which such subjects are so often treated with a polite veneer of political correctness, if and when they are discussed at all.

Like so many films noir, the plot of *NO WAY OUT* hangs on a slender thread of coincidence. In a large but unnamed metropolis, a promising young black doctor, Luther Brooks (Sidney Poitier, making a remarkable film debut), is assigned to the prison ward of the hospital where he has completed his



residency. Two criminals are brought in suffering from gunshot wounds, the insane bigoted Ray Biddle (Richard Widmark), and his brother Johnny (Dick Faxon). When Johnny dies after being treated by Brooks (Poitier), Ray begins a campaign of hatred and revenge that will gradually overtake Johnny's ex-wife Edie (Darnell) before it mushrooms into a full-fledged race riot with a vicious, explosive showdown between Ray and Luther, with Edie trapped between.

The principal cast members are extraordinary. Widmark, no slouch at playing villainous lowlives, here gives one of the most unsympathetic performances in noir history: he's treacherous, he's mean-spirited, he's manipulative, he's cowardly. The actor walks a thin line, pulling out all the stops without overstepping into parody and never playing any tricks to win the audience's sympathy. Widmark reportedly loathed the role and had to be coerced into accepting it; nevertheless, he gives a brave performance. Poitier is equally effective as the young doctor who resists Biddle's relentless race-baiting; he walks into his first scene in his first film radiating the charismatic dignity that would distinguish his entire career. And Darnell, as the flawed and tragic Edie, a woman caught between her lower-class origins and her aspirations for a better life, is magnificent. The conflict between Ray and Luther boils down to a battle for Edie's soul, and Darnell's frustration and anguish are almost palpable.

*NO WAY OUT* boasts some incredibly striking noir images, including an amazingly stark scene, set in a basement, in which Edie is finally consumed by darkness, another in which the screen almost appears to be "letterboxed" by shadows, with just the mo-

tion of Ray's arm indicating that he has punched Edie in the stomach, and a nightmarish sequence involving preparations for the raid that turns into a riot. These scenes wouldn't work if the video contrast were not perfectly balanced. Happily, the DVD has been mastered from a gorgeous print offering pristine video and sound. Extras include a commentary track in which Eddie Muller makes several interesting observations about the film, but makes some unnecessary remarks about his fascination with Darnell's looks. (Sexist comments regarding a film about race and racism? The theatrical trailer is included. Best of all is a photographic gallery displaying the film's unusual and trend-setting advertising graphics.)

Robert Wise fans (and what reader of *Scarlet Street* is not a Robert Wise fan?) will applaud the release of *THE HOUSE ON TELEGRAPH HILL* (Fox, \$14.98), one of the director's heretofore least accessible films. This moody, atmospheric chiller marries two familiar noir plotlines with entertaining results. It starts off with one woman assuming the identity of a dead friend to get herself out of an unpleasant predicament (think Barbara Stanwyck in 1950's *NO MAN OF HER OWN*), then becomes a variation of *GASHLIGHT* (1944), with the impostor slowly becoming convinced that her husband is planning to kill her. Talk about jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

Strikingly beautiful Italian actress Valentina Cortese (billed as Cortese in her native country) plays Viktoria Kowelska, the morally compromised woman in peril. Confined in a Polish concentration camp, Viktoria befriends the dying Karin (Natasha Lytess), who sent her infant son to live with distant—but rich—American relatives as the Nazis began conquering Europe. Liberated by the Allies, Viktoria passes herself off as Karin in order to gain entrance to the United States. She discovers that Karin's young son, Chris (Gordon Gebert), has become the legal heir to a sizeable estate, including a mansion on San Francisco's Telegraph Hill. Problem: Karin's son has been adopted by Alan Spender (Richard Basehart), trustee of the estate. The easiest solution: Karin and Alan marry to avoid a legal battle over custody of the boy and his money. So off they go to the City by the Bay, to live happily ever after—except that Chris has been raised by a curvaceous blond governess (Fay Baker), and Alan's best friend (William Lundigan) just happens to be the American soldier who processed Karin out of the concentration camp back in Poland, and

The deliciously convoluted plot doubles back and twists on itself just when it threatens to become predictable. Director Wise ratchets up the suspense at unexpected moments, catching both his heroine and the audience unawares. Cinematographer Lucien Ballard makes excellent use of the San Francisco setting, seamlessly matching footage shot on location with scenes photographed on the Fox lot. The performances are uniformly solid. Cortese, who would score her greatest success 22 years later in François Truffaut's *DAY FOR NIGHT* (1973), has an intriguing air of mystery about her, and Baker is particularly effective as the governess whose true loyalties remain indiscernible until her final scene. Despite the onscreen tension between them, Cortese and Basehart apparently got along together well in real life, since they married the same year the film was released.

Once again, even the most picky home video aficionado will be delighted with Fox's DVD transfer. Contrast is finely balanced, video is sharp with few blemishes, and the sound is crisp and clear throughout. DVD extras include a commentary by Eddie Muller, the original theatrical trailer, a gallery of photographs, and advertising reproductions. This one is particularly recommended for Robert Wise completists, as well as noir buffs.

One of the most exciting aspects of the Fox Film Noir collection is that so many of these classic titles have never appeared on home video before, in any format. The first wave, issued in March 2005, included three masterpieces that had already proven wildly popular on home video: Otto Preminger's







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The plot of *FALLEN ANGEL* concerns Eric Stanton (Andrews), a drifter who turns up in the tiny oceanside community of Walton, California, where he becomes smitten with sultry café hostess Stella (Linda Darnell). Stella's a brunette beauty who's been around the block more than once, and is waiting for a ticket out of town. She's not particular, and has several local men vying for her favors, waiting for one of them to come up with the cash she believes can make her dreams come true. The unscrupulous Stanton hatches a plan: he'll marry wealthy, naive church pianist June Mills (Alice Faye), dip into her bank account, and then run away with Stella. Leaving his bride at home with her spinster sister, Clara (Anne Revere), on their wedding night, Eric pays a visit to Stella, has a fight with her, gets good and plastered, and becomes the prime suspect when Stella's lifeless body is found the next morning. Did he do it? Did June? Sister Clara? Or was it one of the victim's other admirers (played by Percy Kilbride and Bruce Cabot)? The hard-boiled detective assigned to the case (Charles Bickford) has his money on Stanton.

In addition to being a solid murder mystery, *FALLEN ANGEL* is an in-

triguing study in contrasts, as exemplified by leading ladies Faye and Darnell. Heroine Faye is perpetually bathed in light, her blonde hair a halo around her face, while Darnell often fades into deep shadows, her dark beauty accentuated by black clothing and oversized black lace hats. Faye is an innocent creature of the daylight; Darnell is unquestionably a denizen of the night. Both actresses give expert performances under Preminger's assured direction, although Darnell's is intrinsically the more interesting character, at least during the first half of the film. After Stella has been bumped off, Faye's June Mills begins to undergo a perverse metamorphosis, as she is gradually exposed to the seamier side of life and transforms willingly into the fallen angel of the title. Still, audiences and critics responded more favorably to Darnell, here giving her first "adult" performance at the age of 21, after having played bland ingénue roles since 1939. True, Faye retired from the screen for 17 years after viewing the film, reportedly angry that some of her scenes were trimmed, but she nonetheless is shown to advantage in the final cut.

Fox's DVD presentation of *FALLEN ANGEL* is superb, featuring a gorgeous transfer and a wealth of extras, including the original trailer and a wonderful selection of scene stills, production photographs, and advertising materials. Best of all is the engaging commentary by film historian Eddie Muller. He's joined by Susan Andrews, Dana's daughter, who not only shares many fascinating insights into her father's life and acting career, but makes many keen observations about films in general and *FALLEN ANGEL* in particular. The commentary alone makes this DVD a definite "must have."

Linda Darnell offers an even finer, albeit less showy, performance in Mankiewicz's *NO WAY OUT* (Fox, \$14.98). Personally produced by studio chief Darryl F. Zanuck, the film was advertised as strictly "adult" fare. Far from being a publicist's hype, the label is still valid today. A tough, gritty *noir* that explores racism in America, *NO WAY OUT* is filled with incendiary dialogue—including racist epithets—and situations that must have shocked post-WWII audiences. In fact, it's hard to imagine how this film managed to slide past the Hays Office back in 1950. More than half a century later, its raw power is startling in an era in which such subjects are so often treated with a polite veneer of political correctness, if and when they are discussed at all.

Like so many *films noir*, the plot of *NO WAY OUT* hangs on a slender thread of coincidence. In a large but unnamed metropolis, a promising young black doctor, Luther Brooks (Sidney Poitier, making a remarkable film debut), is assigned to the prison ward of the hospital where he has completed his



residency. Two criminals are brought in suffering from gunshot wounds, the insanely bigoted Ray Biddle (Richard Widmark), and his brother Johnny (Dick Paxton). When Johnny dies after being treated by Brooks (Poitier), Ray begins a campaign of hatred and revenge that will gradually overtake Johnny's ex-wife Edie (Darnell) before it mushrooms into a full-fledged race riot with a vicious, explosive showdown between Ray and Luther, with Edie trapped between.

The principal cast members are extraordinary. Widmark, no slouch at playing villainous lowlifes, here gives one of the most unsympathetic performances in *noir* history: he's treacherous, he's mean-spirited, he's manipulative, he's cowardly. The actor walks a thin line, pulling out all the stops without overstepping into parody and never playing any tricks to win the audience's sympathy. Widmark reportedly loathed the role and had to be coerced into accepting it; nevertheless, he gives a brave performance. Poitier is equally effective as the young doctor who resists Biddle's relentless race-baiting; he walks into his first scene in his first film radiating the charismatic dignity that would distinguish his entire career. And Darnell, as the flawed and tragic Edie, a woman caught between her lower-class origins and her aspirations for a better life, is magnificent. The conflict between Ray and Luther boils down to a battle for Edie's soul, and Darnell's frustration and anguish are almost palpable.

NO WAY OUT boasts some incredibly striking *noir* images, including an amazingly stark scene, set in a basement, in which Edie is finally consumed by darkness; another in which the screen almost appears to be "letterboxed" by shadows, with just the mo-

tion of Ray's arm indicating that he has punched Edie in the stomach; and a nightmarish sequence involving preparations for the raid that turns into a riot. These scenes wouldn't work if the video contrast were not perfectly balanced. Happily, the DVD has been mastered from a gorgeous print offering pristine video and sound. Extras include a commentary track in which Eddie Muller makes several interesting observations about the film, but makes some unnecessary remarks about his fascination with Darnell's looks. (Sexist comments regarding a film about racism... hmmm!) The theatrical trailer is included. Best of all is a photographic gallery displaying the film's unusual and trend-setting advertising graphics.

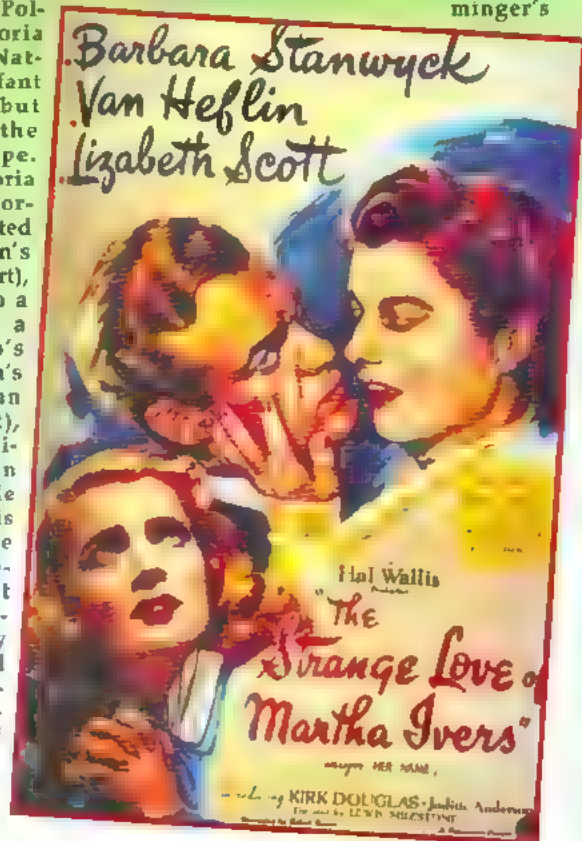
Robert Wise fans (and what reader of *Scarlet Street* is not a Robert Wise fan?) will applaud the release of *THE HOUSE ON TELEGRAPH HILL* (Fox, \$14.98), one of the director's heretofore least accessible films. This moody, atmospheric chiller marries two familiar *noir* plotlines with entertaining results. It starts off with one woman assuming the identity of a dead friend to get herself out of an unpleasant predicament (think Barbara Stanwyck in 1950's *NO MAN OF HER OWN*), then becomes a variation of *CASLIGHT* (1944), with the imposter slowly becoming convinced that her husband is planning to kill her. Talk about jumping from the frying pan into the fire!

Strikingly beautiful Italian actress Valentina Cortese (billed as Cortese in her native country) plays Viktoria Kowelska, the morally compromised woman in peril. Confined in a Polish concentration camp, Viktoria befriends the dying Karin (Natasha Lytess), who sent her infant son to live with distant—but rich—American relatives as the Nazis began conquering Europe. Liberated by the Allies, Viktoria passes herself off as Karin in order to gain entrance to the United States. She discovers that Karin's young son, Chris (Gordon Gebert), has become the legal heir to a sizeable estate, including a mansion on San Francisco's Telegraph Hill. Problem: Karin's son has been adopted by Alan Spender (Richard Basehart), trustee of the estate. The easiest solution: Karin and Alan marry to avoid a legal battle over custody of the boy and his money. So off they go to the City by the Bay, to live happily ever after—except that Chris has been raised by a curvaceous blond governess (Fay Baker), and Alan's best friend (William Lundigan) just happens to be the American soldier who processed Karin out of the concentration camp back in Poland, and...

The deliciously convoluted plot doubles back and twists on itself just when it threatens to become predictable. Director Wise ratchets up the suspense at unexpected moments, catching both his heroine and the audience unawares. Cinematographer Lucien Ballard makes excellent use of the San Francisco setting, seamlessly matching footage shot on location with scenes photographed on the Fox lot. The performances are uniformly solid. Cortese, who would score her greatest success 22 years later in François Truffaut's *DAY FOR NIGHT* (1973), has an intriguing air of mystery about her, and Baker is particularly effective as the governess whose true loyalties remain indiscernible until her final scene. Despite the onscreen tension between them, Cortese and Basehart apparently got along together well in real life, since they married the same year the film was released.

Once again, even the most picky home video aficionado will be delighted with Fox's DVD transfer. Contrast is finely balanced, video is sharp with few blemishes, and the sound is crisp and clear throughout. DVD extras include a commentary by Eddie Muller, the original theatrical trailer, a gallery of photographs, and advertising reproductions. This one is particularly recommended for Robert Wise completists, as well as *noir* buffs.

One of the most exciting aspects of the Fox Film Noir collection is that so many of these classic titles have never appeared on home video before, in any format. The first wave, issued in March 2005, included three masterpieces that had already proven wildly popular on home video: Otto Preminger's







**LEFT** Comedy queen Lucille Ball gave a splendid performance opposite Mark Stevens in *THE DARK CORNER* (1946), as a secretary helping her private eye boss beat a murder rap. **RIGHT**, Victor Mature and Brian Donlevy were top-billed in *KISS OF DEATH* (1947), but it was Richard Widmark who stole the show and became a star as the giggling psychopath Tommy Udo.

masterpiece *LAURA*, Henry Hathaway's docu-noir *CALL NORTHSIDE 777* (1947), and Elia Kazan's *PANIC IN THE STREETS* (1950). The second trio, which appeared in June 2005, brought the long-awaited *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* (1947), *THE STREET WITH NO NAME* (1948), and *HOUSE OF BAMBOO* (1955) to DVD. (All six are priced at \$14.98 each.)

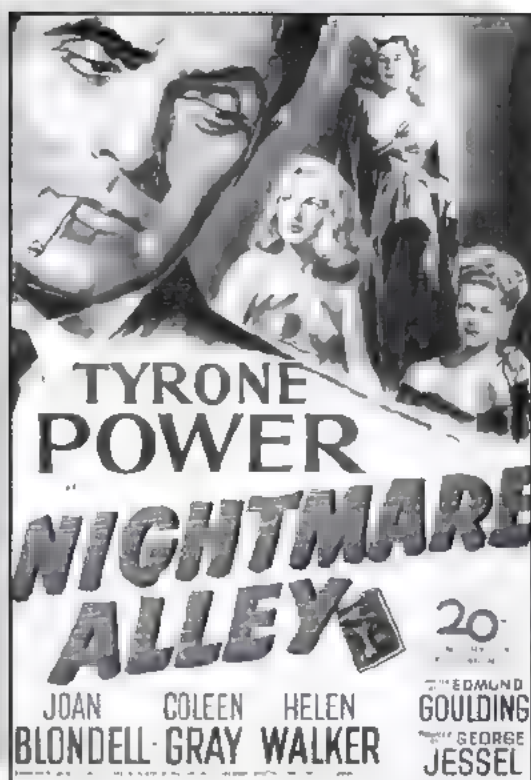
Apptly titled, *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* is a film that Tyrone Power, then Fox's biggest leading man, fought hard to make. Better known for his matinee idol looks than his acting prowess, Power thought the role of Stan Carlisle—a manipulative hustler who cheats his way into a successful carnival act and then claws his way up the show biz ladder—could expand his critical reputation. His instinct served him well. Under the direction of Edmund Goulding, Power's performance is one of his finest, and earned him some of the best notices of his career.

The film itself is the *noir* counterpart to Tod Browning's equally infamous horror story, *FREAKS* (1932), with Power making a dark descent into the depths of human depravity. Power's personal charm and physical beauty make Stan's downfall all the more shocking and repellant; it's a credit to his and Goulding's craft that they're able to overcome the improbably hopeful ending that the Hays Office demanded be tacked onto the film. This masterpiece of the bizarre features outstanding supporting performances from Joan Blondell, Coleen Gray, and Helen Walker as the women whom Stan uses; his ultimate betrayal by one of them is a brilliant twist. The DVD includes a commentary track (this one by *noir* researchers James Ursini and Alain Silver) and the theatrical trailer. Overall, the transfer is sharp, and shows off Lee Garmes' inky cinematography beautifully. Add this one to your "must-own" list.

*THE STREET WITH NO NAME* is one of the best of the docu-noirs that Fox excelled in making during the late forties. The title is taken from a quote by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover about organized crime, which was then seeping into smaller American cities. Fox contract player Mark Stevens, a handsome and capable leading man whose career never really took off, heads the cast as Gene Cordell, the FBI agent who goes undercover to infiltrate a gang headed by Alec Stiles (Richard Widmark, who commits a little burglary of his own by stealing the film). Beautifully directed by William Keighley, the film is a fast-paced crime yarn lifted out of the ordinary by the interplay between Stevens and Widmark, whose performances indicate a subtextual sexual interest between their two characters. (Cordell's undercover surname is Manly!) This tension ratchets up the suspense as the two men alternate between being the pursuer and the pursued.

**LEFT**: Richard Widmark played a racist who sparks a riot in *NO WAY OUT* (1950). Linda Darnell and Sidney Poitier costarred. **RIGHT**: In *WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS*, Gary Merrill played a gangster whose "moll" appeared to be one of his henchmen (Neville Brand). Dana Andrews played the cop out to bring them down. **PAGE 75 BOTTOM RIGHT**: William Eythe played an FBI agent infiltrating a gang of spies (including one played by a curious Leo G. Carroll obviously searching for George and Marion Kerby) in *THE HOUSE ON 92ND STREET* (1945).





The gay subtext is even more pronounced in *HOUSE OF BAMBOO*, writer/director Sam Fuller's reworking of *THE STREET WITH NO NAME*, with Robert Ryan and Robert Stack standing in for Widmark and Stevens. Filmed in CinemaScope and De Luxe color, and reset in Japan, the film is arguably more an international crime story than a genuine film noir. Missing are many of the stylistic trademarks typically associated with the genre. Most scenes take place in bright sunlight in order to take advantage of the colorful Japanese locations and to fill the wide screen, the sense of claustrophobia that characterizes so many noirs simply isn't present. Cult director Fuller isn't able to coax much of a performance from the wooden Stack, the acting honors go to Ryan. As Sandy Dawson, the smoothly diabolical crime lord who violates his own heartless standards of conduct when handling protégé Eddie Kenner (Stack), Ryan imbues his character with delicious ambiguity: does Dawson fully recognize the implications of his feelings toward Kenner? Although the original is a much more interesting and satisfying example of noir, it's fun—and instructive—to watch both films as a double feature and compare their thematic and stylistic differences.

September 2005 brought another bounty of prime noir from Fox (again, at \$14.98 each). *THE HOUSE ON 92ND STREET* (1945), previously released on VHS, made its DVD debut in a deluxe presentation that includes an Eddie Muller commentary, a photo gallery, and images from the film's original pressbook. This gem was the first of the great Fox docu-noirs, a series of films based on actual events and filmed in part away from the studio on the original locations. William Eythe takes the lead-

ing role as Bill Dietrich, a double agent reporting to FBI investigator George Briggs (Lloyd Nolan). His assignment? To infiltrate a gang of embedded Nazi spies who are smuggling American atomic secrets out of the country. Clocking in at a fast-paced 88 minutes, the film is a spectacularly photographed suspenseer ably directed by veteran Henry Hathaway, featuring especially solid performances from Leo G. Carroll as a nasty spy and Signe Hasso as—spoiler ahead!—a cross-dressing villainess.

*SOMEWHERE IN THE NIGHT* (1946), a seldom shown thriller making its home video debut, is more intriguing in theory than execution. One of the first noirs to deal with the subject of amnesia, the film stars John Hodiak as George Taylor, a WWII veteran who awakens in an army hospital with no memory of who he is or what his past has entailed. Tracing down a handful of slim clues, he discovers that he may have been an accessory to an unsolved murder before shipping off to the warfront. His search for the truth is hampered by the mysterious person—or persons—who were also involved in the crime. What might have been a thrilling whodunit falls flat, undermined by poorly paced direction (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, making his sophomore effort after 1946's *DRAGONWYCK*), lackluster performances by the two romantic leads (Hodiak and Nancy Guild), and a script that tips its hand long before the climax. More's the pity because, on the plus side, the film boasts dazzling cinematography by Norbert Brodine (who also shot *THE HOUSE ON 92ND STREET*), and marvelous supporting performances by the ever-reliable Lloyd Nolan as a dogged detective, and Josephine Hutchinson, who steals the entire film in a single scene.

September also marked the Region 1 debut of Otto Preminger's cult thriller, *WHIRLPOOL* (1949), which reunited the director with his LAURA star, Gene Tierney. In this outing, Tierney is Ann Sutton, an outwardly perfect upper-class housewife whose inner turmoil and resentment at being under the control of men manifest themselves through kleptomania. The rub is, husband Bill (Richard Conte) is a well-known psychoanalyst who's oblivious to his wife's problem. Finally caught stealing a pin from a department store, Ann is rescued from exposure by hypnotist David Korvo (José Ferrer), who offers to treat her insomnia and persistent headaches. Korvo has a secret agenda, and soon enough Ann finds herself coming out of a hypnotic trance in the company of a corpse. The resolution of the mystery is suspenseful—albeit a bit fantastic—but the film is so well-acted (especially by Tierney and Ferrer), and creatively directed that it's easy to suspend belief. Indeed, there are several marvelous

parallels between this film and *LAURA*: a dead woman's portrait dominates her home, a man (or men) treat a woman as an object to be controlled, a killer fires a wild shot that destroys a key prop. Preminger's mastery of the long, fluid take is very much in evidence here, and Fox's DVD transfer is impeccable.

Fox's December 2005 releases (\$14.98 each) included the third Preminger/Tierney collaboration, and this time they were joined by *LAURA* costar Dana Andrews. *WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS* (1950) features one of the underrated Andrews' finest performances, as brutal New York detective Mark Dixon, who unintentionally kills a man (Craig Stevens). Covering up his crime, Mark finds himself involved in the investigation as his victim's father-in-law (Tom Tully) falls under suspicion. Hoping to kill two birds with one stone, Mark tries to pin his crime on slippery underworld gang leader Tommy Scalise (Gary Merrill), who was a friend of Mark's hoodlum father. To further complicate matters, Mark soon finds himself falling in love with Morgan Taylor (Tierney), the wife of the man he killed!

A dark, brooding tale about a morally compromised man who makes a mistake that spirals irreversibly out of control, *WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS* is an example of noir at its finest.

The supporting cast, which also includes Karl Malden, Bert Freed, and Ruth Donnelly, is uniformly superb. Merrill makes a memorable villain. Alert audiences will note that Tommy Scalise is one of the few film gangsters who never has a moll by his side; indeed, he prefers relaxing in Turkish baths, letting crony Steve (Neville Brand) massage the soreness out of his muscles (Subtext, anyone?)

The DVD presentation is perfection, with one notable exception, and that is the substandard commentary by Eddie Muller. He often gets his facts wrong (Preminger and Tierney made four films together, not three), and his savage criticism of Tierney's performance is unwarranted. Muller complains that Morgan's life is in shambles and she's act-





ing as if nothing is amiss; while in fact, less than a minute later, Morgan says: "It's a wonderful day. No job, everybody against me, my poor dad sitting in a cell . . . and it's a wonderful day. Isn't that amazing?" Most viewers might suspect that Tierney was, in fact, simply playing the character as written!

Not to be left out, LAURA's Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb)—for all intents and purposes—pops up in *THE DARK CORNER* (1946), another December 2005 release. Here Webb's character is Hardy Cathcart, but he still speaks with the same inimitable sneer. ("How I detest the dawn. The grass always looks as though it had been left out overnight.") The film's leading man is fourth-billed Mark Stevens, giving a marvelous performance as Brad Galt, a private eye whose tough veneer barely covers the fact that, inside, he's a complicated mass of insecurity and self-doubt. Lucille Ball has one of her best dramatic roles as Kathleen, the intelligent and compassionate secretary who sticks by him when he's framed for murder. While Brad and Kathleen are working on extricating him from the mess he's in, Cathcart is preoccupied with holding on to his wife (Cathy Downs). The single piece connecting these two parts of a complicated jigsaw puzzle is a mysterious character known only as The Man in the White Suit, played by William Bendix. How everything finally fits together to reveal a complete portrait of the murderer and his motives makes for a gripping, hard-boiled *noir*, ably directed by Henry Hathaway.

Hathaway is also the guiding force behind *KISS OF DEATH* (1947), which introduced Richard Widmark to the screen. In this docu-*noir*, Victor Mature gives one of his most compelling performances as Nick Bianco, a small-time thief who prefers prison time to turning stool pigeon. Serving his sentence in Sing Sing, Nick eventually learns that his wife has committed suicide, leaving their two young daughters unprotected. Cutting a deal with the District Attorney (Brian Donlevy), Nick agrees to testify against the psychotic and vicious killer Tommy Udo (Widmark) in exchange for parole. Only the jury doesn't convict Udo, who now comes after Nick and his family with a vengeance.

In many respects, *KISS OF DEATH* is the quintessential Fox *noir*. So many classic elements are in evidence: a flawed hero who makes a series of bad choices that have unforeseen and monumental consequences; a villain without social or moral boundaries (this film contains the famous scene in which a giggling Udo shoves wheelchair-bound Mrs. Rizzo, played by Mildred Dunnock, down a flight of stairs); claustrophobia-inducing spaces such as prison cells and restaurant booths; and deep, black shadows that may conceal any number of unsuspected dangers. This film is

heavy on both substance and style, and the DVD is beautifully rendered.

The one thing missing from *KISS OF DEATH* is a femme fatale, a *noir* character very much in the forefront of *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* (Fox, \$14.98). Released as an entry in Fox's Studio Classic Series, the film is a rarity: a bona fide *noir* shot in vivid three-strip Technicolor. Cameraman Leon Shamroy won an Oscar for his sublime work here, in which mottled hues of blue and orange substitute for black. Gene Tierney plays Ellen Berent Harland, a woman so jealous and possessive that

undoubtedly loved the DVD edition, which features a breathtakingly lush restoration and a wealth of extras, including news footage of the film's Los Angeles premiere and the 1952 theatrical reissue trailer.

Another recent Fox release that is not part of the Film Noir series, but deserves an extra measure of attention, is the 1941 *DRESSED TO KILL* (Fox, \$14.98)—not to be confused with the 1946 Sherlock Holmes mystery. (The Holmes film, crudely colorized and re-titled *PRELUDE TO MURDER*, is available at the same price and not worth a penny.) This little gem is part of the Michael Shayne series that starred Lloyd Nolan as Brett Halliday's intrepid shamus. Fox released seven of these delightful B films between 1940 and 1942, of which this is the third. A deft blend of mystery and comedy, the plot concerns a pair of backstage murders, the twist being that the play in question was produced 25 years earlier! Throughout the movie, Shayne has his work cut out for him as he tries to keep one move ahead of Inspector Pierson (William Demarest) and two jumps ahead of the murderer(s) while keeping his impatient bride-to-be (Mary Beth Hughes) stalled on what's supposed to be their wedding day. The film clips along at breakneck speed, coming in at just under 77 minutes. Along the way, there are excellent performances from such stalwart second leads and character players as Sheila Ryan and (in a rare comedy role) Henry Daniell, billed as "Daniel." Mantan Moreland also shows up in tandem with occasional comedy partner Ben Carter. The film is a testament to the high quality of Fox's second-string unit; it can only be hoped that Fox is planning to release the other six Michael Shayne features on DVD.

Paramount Home Entertainment has recently released the definitive edition of *THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS* (Paramount, \$14.98) on DVD. A dark, brooding *noir* classic that had long languished in the limbo of public domain titles, *MARTHA IVERS* was already available in over a dozen other DVD incarnations. What makes Paramount's version superior is the quality of the video elements. The picture is noticeably sharper, virtually free of flickering and graininess, with superb contrast. Blacks are inky, and the gradation of grays is impeccable. Since so much of the film takes place at night, or in darkened rooms, the improved video makes for a profoundly more enjoyable viewing experience.

*MARTHA IVERS* features the legendary Barbara Stanwyck in one of her most perverse and thrillingly amoral roles. As a teenager, Martha (Janis Wilson in a deliciously high-strung performance) kills her rich, domineering aunt (Judith Anderson) one dark and violently stormy night. Her crime is witnessed by hapless milquetoast Walter O'Neil (Mickey Kuhn), whose



she will stop at nothing to monopolize husband Richard (Cornel Wilde), just as she had her father before his death. In the film's two most famous and shocking sequences, Ellen deliberately allows Richard's crippled teenage brother Danny (Darryl Hickman) to drown in a lake; and later, throws herself down a staircase to abort the child she fears will compete for Richard's affection. Tierney gives a marvelous performance, her exotically beautiful face a perfect mask, a female Dorian Gray. Considering its treatment of such then-taboo themes as abortion and incest, *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* is unquestionably one of the most subversive mainstream films to come out of Hollywood during the forties. Nonetheless—or perhaps, accordingly—it was a huge popular success, proving to be Fox's highest grossing film of the entire decade. Certainly, supporting cast member Vincent Price was an enthusiastic champion of the film, mentioning in several of his last interviews during the late eighties that he had recently seen one of the few remaining original nitrate prints, and praising its beauty. Price would have

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greedy and opportunistic father (Roman Bohnen) manipulates the situation to his own benefit; Martha and Walter's friend, Sam (Darryl Hickman), had fled the murder scene, and Walter remains a constant threat to the conspirators. Years pass; a scapegoat is executed for the murder of Martha's aunt; and then one day the grown-up Sam (Van Heflin) returns to Iverstown, much to the consternation of the now-married Martha (Stanwyck) and Walter (Kirk Douglas) in his film debut).

Repressed desires, festering resentments, and rampant paranoia all run wild as these three old "friends" begin to form ever shifting alliances, with none for all and each one out for their own selfish best interests. And it ends as it must, in an avalanche of betrayal and a hail of bullets.

Brilliantly acted and skillfully directed by Lewis Milestone, *THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS* belongs in the library of every *noir* addict—and yes, Paramount's bare-bones but supreme edition is well worth the price of an upgrade.

Fritz Lang devotees will be interested in two titles recently released by Kino Video. *HOUSE BY THE RIVER* (Kino, \$24.95) is a film that was long believed to be lost. Happily, an archival print was recently discovered in the vault of the National Film and Television Archive in London, and that print has now been meticulously restored and transferred to DVD. The result is well worth the effort. Louis Hayward stars as Stephen Byrne, a writer who

inadvertently kills his comely housekeeper (Dorothy Patrick) after she refuses his sexual advances and begins to scream. He enlists the help of his brother (Lee Bowman) in disposing of the body, which they dump miles away in the river flowing behind Byrne's property. Ah, but the river's current is strong! Guess what eventually appears before Byrne's horrified eyes? That's just the beginning of this fascinating *noir*, which includes some haunting images, including Byrne cowering in the shadows of his front hallway as a silhouetted figure rattles the doorknob to get inside, and his desperate trip down the river at night as he seeks to reclaim the wood sack containing his victim's dislodged body. Starkly photographed, crisply acted, and brilliantly directed, *HOUSE BY THE RIVER* is a minor masterpiece that is definitely worth a look.

Kino's other Lang offering is one that may be vaguely familiar to readers of this magazine. It's a 1945 film called *SCARLET STREET* (Kino, \$24.95), starring Edward G. Robinson, Joan Bennett, and Dan Duryea. You may think you've seen this classic before—but the truth is, you probably haven't. Not really. *SCARLET STREET* is one of those celebrated films that fell into the public domain when its copyright lapsed, and subsequently was exploited by countless companies that traded on the film's reputation while marketing substandard, multigenerational copies to consumers. Kino's release features a high-definition transfer from the 35mm

negative that has been preserved by the Library of Congress. It's a revelation! Who could have imagined the degree of subtlety in direction and production—and the nuances in performance—that were washed out of the film each time it was dubbed over the years? Kino's release of *SCARLET STREET* may be the most effective argument in favor of film preservation ever produced. Certainly it's a "must-see," "must-have" DVD for everyone who frequents *The Street That is Scarlet*.







Back in 1961, this 10-year-old writer trotted himself off to a showing of *ATLANTIS, THE LOST CONTINENT*. It had been heavily flogged in the pages of the original *Famous Monsters of Film-land* and the allure of beast men, death rays, fish-shaped submarines, and, of course, the ultimate destruction of the fabled land were irresistible.

Alas, *ATLANTIS* remains locked in a 10-year-old's mentality and the various budgetary cutbacks forced on producer George Pal become more obvious with time. But if the film has become a guilty pleasure, it possesses a magnificent score by Russell Garcia, who had provided the music for Pal's previous film, *THE TIME MACHINE* (1960). In fact, parts of that score reappear in *ATLANTIS*—possibly more a result of MCM's determination to have the film made quickly as well as cheaply than from any lack of inspiration on Garcia's part. It's a score that has long cried out for a full representation, fortunately *Film Score Monthly* has complied (FSM Vol 8 No.2).

*ATLANTIS* is built along the full-blooded lines of Biblical epic scores and opens with a bold, optimistic fanfare (later the theme associated with the slave revolt) and a brief statement of the love theme. Following the spoken prologue so loved by Pal (and voiced as usual by Paul Frees), the majestic and imperious theme for the lost continent plays under the opening credits with only a hint of the martial qualities that will be added to it as it reappears in the course of the film.

The real spine of the score, however, is the love theme for the fisherman Demetrios (Anthony Hall) and the Princess Antilia (Joyce Taylor). Garcia deploys it in a variety of tempi and orchestrations; the most intriguing and beautiful may be the variation early in the film for strings, harp, and vibraphone, interrupted by brass warnings—fragments of the Atlantis theme signaling the submarine gliding to and fro in the distance.

Garcia's score alone would be inducement enough to purchase the CD, but FSM has included another much-desired Pal score on the disc—*THE POWER* (1968), by one of the few inarguable geniuses of film music, Miklos Rozsa. By the late sixties, Hollywood had little use for composers who hadn't the knack of turning out pop ditties. In his memoirs, Rozsa refers ruefully to this being the period when he became a science fiction composer; the truth is that only the fantasy filmmakers still knew the value of a sym-

phonic score; without them Rozsa, Bernard Herrmann, and others might not have gotten any assignments at all.

Rozsa's career had actually come full circle; his first score was for *THE THIEF OF BAGDAD* (1941). During his career, Rozsa was closely identified with various genres—film noir in the forties, Biblical epics in the fifties—without ever appreciably altering his sound: a slithering yet forceful, melodic but dissonant, sweet-sour, post-Romanticism that was hugely individualistic yet suitable for so many occasions. Oddly, while there is no mistaking a Rozsa score, it can be damned difficult telling them apart, save in those instances when the composer featured an unusual instrument (the theremin in 1945's *SPELLBOUND*) or the use of ethnic flavors (1961's *EL*



*Life as a slave on ATLANTIS THE LOST CONTINENT* (1961) makes men out of boys—and animals out of men!

*CID*). Here it's the cimbalom: a cross between a dulcimer and a zither that sounds like an unwell music box—and gypsy music from the composer's native Hungary. Rozsa professed to hating both the instrument and anything to do with gypsy music (both were Pal's suggestions), but they lend the score a sound that sets it apart from other sci-fi films and other Rozsa compositions.

*THE POWER* begins with a typical Rozsa frenetic rush, giving way to a pounding string background over which first the cimbalom is overlaid and then lushly pungent strings. The film is perhaps the most noirish sci-fi film until *BLADE RUNNER* (1982) and Rozsa appropriately invokes the harder edges of his noirs, the gypsy flourishes—and a lovely guitar solo, "Viva L'Amour"—lifting the often oppressive tone.

*THE POWER* may not be one of Rozsa's masterpieces, but it hardly deserves the disdain in which he held it. Similarly, Dmitri Tiomkin had little use for his score for 1951's *THE THING FROM*

*ANOTHER WORLD* (FSM Vol. 8 No. 1); in this case the work is one of the composer's best, even if he preferred films that utilized songs rendered, as often as not, by the Ken Darby singers in overproduced arrangements that now have more than a whiff of camp.

The more abstract *THE THING* remains as fresh as when it was created over 50 years ago. The score mostly lacks any discernible melodies, though none are truly needed given that only two moods are evoked: anxious foreboding and outright terror. Aside from a fanfare under the Winchester Films logo and a triumphant burst at the close, any lighter moments within the film are provided solely by the cast's nonchalant performances. Perhaps it was this lack of scope that displeased Tiomkin, but the score's leanness and acute placement make it masterful.

### More Monstrous Movie Music

Standing well apart from other small firms devoted to film music is Monstrous Movie Music; where others remaster original recording sessions, MMM reconstructs the scores and has a symphony orchestra create sparkling new recordings—not an inexpensive undertaking when the entire corporation consists of David Schecter and Kathleen Mayne. The small labor force and the meticulous care lavished partly explains why MMM has managed only five releases since 1997.

The new CDs are every bit as impressive as their earlier ones, with the movies and music just as eclectic. *THIS ISLAND EARTH* (MMM 1954) opens with Walter Green's dramatic and loopy title music for Roger Corman's *WAR OF THE SATELLITES* (1958), a nifty little appetizer to the collection and quite unlike anything else included. Advertising for *THIS ISLAND EARTH* (1955) promised an epic of interplanetary space flight, but the film is earthbound for most of its running time, at least half is devoted to the mystery of just why the guy with the tall forehead has such advanced scientific doodads. Resultantly much of Herman Stein's lush score (with contributions from Hans J. Salter and Henry Mancini) is moody cues for woodwinds, electric organ, and harp, opened up by expansive passages for strings. The music is often obscured by dialogue and sound effects in the film, so the opportunity to hear it in its entirety is a welcome one.

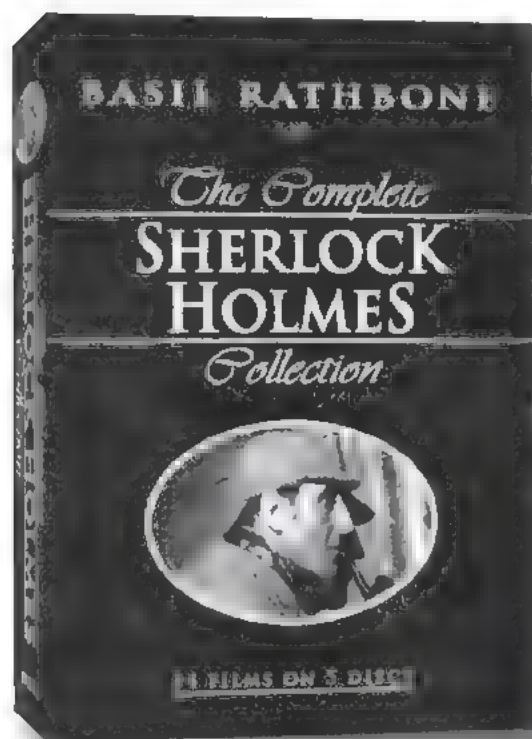
Columbia's B music budgets were even tighter than Universal's. The overworked Misha Bakaleinikoff raided the library for appropriate cues and even tossed off a few staves himself to tie things together. In *EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS* (1956), a bevy of composers (including Miklos Rozsa) give musical support to Ray Harryhausen's hovering discs. The dramatic title track is recycled from Daniele Amfitheatrof's score for the Cary Grant film, *TALK OF THE TOWN* (1942).

*Continued on page 81*

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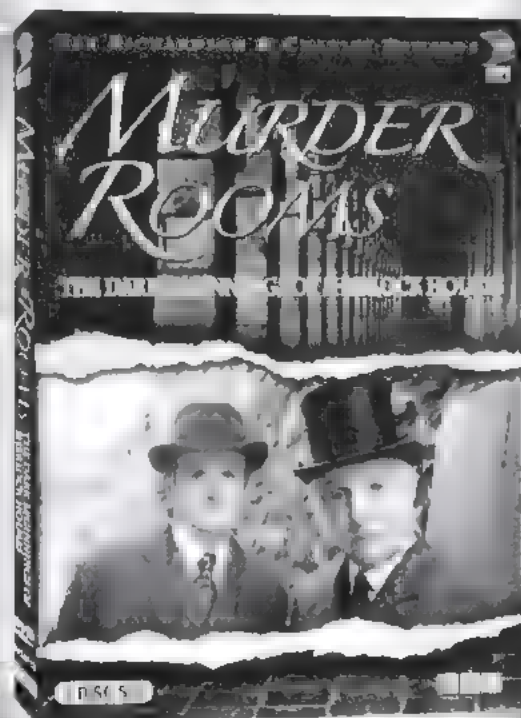
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LEFT: The B.I.G. Gordon and the L.I.T.T.L.E. Gordon—Bert I. and Susan, on the set of one of their movies together. RIGHT: Susan wasn't in *THE MAGIC SWORD* (1962), but she helped publicize it by posing for a photo while reading the comic-book adaptation.

## SUSAN GORDON

*Continued from page 41*

project to use whatever influence he had to convince the powers that be at the Library of Congress to give *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET* preferential treatment. Finally, last summer, on my birthday no less, he was able to view *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET* for the first time anyone had seen it since it was first broadcast in 1959. It all seemed surreal, but I still wasn't going to believe it until I would see the tape for myself. So last December, I made an appointment to view it, and went down to the Library of Congress. I introduced myself, and a woman brought out the tape and put it in my hands. I saw the name of the show printed on the tape's label. I said to the woman, "You have no idea what this means to me," and my eyes welled up and I started crying. It was an amazing experience to finally get to see my *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET*. It brought back such memories!

**SS:** Let's get back to *THE FIVE PENNIES*.

**SG:** After the musician's strike was settled, *THE FIVE PENNIES* went into production. We filmed for nine weeks. It was probably the longest production I ever worked on. As for my schooling during that period, there was a welfare worker on set to teach me. All child actors were required by law to have three hours of schooling each day and no more than five hours in front of the camera, for a total of eight hours a day. It was a wonderful experience. Tuesday Weld, who played my character at an older age, shared the same classroom.

**SS:** What was Danny Kaye like?

**SG:** Oh, he was just as wonderful as he could be! I was surprised to hear, many years later, that Danny Kaye was a very difficult person to work with, because he was only wonderful to me.

Part of it, I'm sure, was that he wanted to create a comfortable rapport with me off screen, so that there'd be a natural relationship between us onscreen. Barbara Bel Geddes was also quite wonderful. In *THE FIVE PENNIES*, I sang two songs, one with Danny Kaye and one with Danny Kaye and Louis Armstrong. First, we recorded the songs in the recording studio and then, when the numbers were filmed, we lip synced to the recordings. I remember the day we recorded "The Music Goes Round and Round." They put me in my own booth and Danny in his, so they could isolate our two voices. Well, when he was doing his part I started to get a tickle in my throat. I needed so badly to clear my throat, but I knew if I did, it would ruin the take. I turned blue in the face before Danny finished the song! (Laughs) Finally, they recorded Danny's part and mine, singing together. Although they don't usually do it that way, somehow it worked well, and they kept the take. I felt very professional when they did that. At first—since my voice wasn't professionally trained—they thought they'd use a seasoned child singer to dub my songs. They auditioned little girls who had trained voices, but finally decided—much to my pleasure—that they would indeed, use my voice, because it would sound more natural. Barbara Bel Geddes, however, didn't sing her own songs. They were dubbed.

**SS:** It's a very entertaining film.

**SG:** Thank you. Years and years later, when I was living in Japan, I found out that *THE FIVE PENNIES* was a very popular movie there. In fact, from time to time, it would be reissued. I went to one such theater where it was playing and said to the manager in my best Japanese, "That's me in the poster"—he must have been confused or surprised, but he gave me the post-

er. It's all in Japanese, of course. Here's another interesting story from Japan. I was teaching English, and one class I had was filled with businessmen and women from one of the Japanese companies. At the end of the year, we had a party. We turned on the radio to listen to some music and I started switching the channels—and all of a sudden I heard myself singing "The Five Pennies" with Danny Kaye and Louis Armstrong. What are the chances of that happening?

**SS:** Following *THE FIVE PENNIES*, did you ever do any singing again?

**SG:** As a matter of fact, I was very lucky and honored to be invited to sing on a wonderful CD called *JEEPERS CREEPERS GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS*. I sing "You're My Living Doll," which is the only song from *ATTACK OF THE PEOPLE*. Although I didn't sing the song in the movie, I got my chance to sing it on the CD.

**SS:** Your second film for your father was *THE BOY AND THE PIRATES*.

**SG:** That was a fun film to do. I had already made *THE MAN IN THE NET* with Charles Herbert, who was the boy of *THE BOY AND THE PIRATES*. He also had a small part in *THE FIVE PENNIES*. We shot on location at Malibu Beach and that became my playground. I was the only girl in the whole film, save for a very small scene at the beginning with the woman playing Charlie's mother. Of course, to be the only girl surrounded by pirates was not exactly one of my dreams, but Charlie and I had a good time. I played two roles: the present day Kathy and then, when Charlie finds the genie in the bottle and gets his wish and ends up on the pirate ship, I was Katrina, speaking with a Dutch accent which was very much not. (Laughs) I wore a lovely Victorian red velvet dress, which I still

*Continued on page 82*

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## SUSAN GORDON

Continued from page 80

have—and which I also can't fit into anymore.

**SS:** A pirate film was quite a change of pace for your father. Before, he'd concentrated mainly on horror and sci-fi films.

**SG:** I admired my dad because he was free enough to let his creativity go in whatever direction he wanted. He wasn't locked into a certain mindset. Also, it was great that he was making movies that conveniently had a part for me in them.

**SS:** Clearly, he still wasn't being referred to as Susan Gordon's father.

**SG:** That became a running joke between us. We had a very good father/daughter relationship, obviously, and working together on the movies added to it. You know those old movies, where there's a vaudeville team and one of them overhears that the other has been invited to the play the Palace, and he doesn't want to hold him back, so he steps aside? My dad used to say to me, "You won't go to the Palace without me, will you?" And I'd say, "I'll never go without you." Then at one point, when things were happening big with my career, my dad said, "Susan, it's okay, you can go to the Palace without me."

**SS:** *TORMENTED* is perhaps your best film with your father. So much is from the child's point of view, and yet it's an adult film with adult themes. It's a case of your probably not knowing everything the story is about at the time you were making it.

**SG:** Definitely—and my dad being the protective father that he was, he made sure I didn't know everything that was going on. (Laughs.) A lot of the scenes were done on the beach and at the lighthouse, which actually wasn't there. They just had a front for it. When we were supposed to be at the top of the lighthouse, about to fall off, we

were actually only three feet off the ground. That was also a fun movie to do. There was one scene in which I'm playing chopsticks on the piano and the grown-ups are talking about the Richard Carlson character. There's some comment about him being a jazz musician, and I'm supposed to say, "What's the matter with a jazz musician?" But I couldn't say "musician." It kept coming out "magician," and I kept flubbing it, take after take. Finally, my dad said, "Let's just leave it that way." So if you listen carefully in the scene, you'll hear "jazz magician." (Laughs)

**SS:** Your experiences as a child star seem to have been good ones.

**SG:** And I'm very grateful. The stories we hear of the difficulties child actors have is not so much while they're acting, as afterwards, in making the transition back to a normal life. Those are the sad stories. I was lucky. I'm sure the fact that my parents sheltered me from the fluff—the flattery and the phoniness of Hollywood—that had a lot to do with it. I was left with only good memories.

**JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS, featuring Susan Gordon, is available for ordering on page 19**

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...

## RECORD RACK

Continued from page 78

Ron Goodwin's work encompassed numerous genres, though he is probably best known for his whimsical theme for Margaret Rutherford's Miss Marple romps, the perfect assignment for a composer whose work can rarely be described as getting below the surface of the films he scored. Goodwin's *THE DAY*

*OF THE TRIFFIDS* (1962) is eerie and unsettling but simply illustrates the onscreen action. Mayne steps in to conduct on this suite and does an admirable job.

First up on the new Ray Harryhausen album (MMM 1953) is *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* (1949) by Roy Webb—an other underrated workhorse. For *JOE*, a film peculiarly poised between dramatic adventure and comedy, his score is playful but doesn't stint on the intensity. My only quibble—and it's a minor one, given it's the only one with either CD—is that the timpani is too prominent in the mix during the night club scenes.

Harryhausen's *20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH* (1957) is another Columbia hodgepodge. It's entirely to Bakaleinikoff's credit that it all flows together as well as it does and that for the title he eschewed prototypical thriller scoring in favor of the delicate and lovely "Heaven" by Frederick Hollander.

Last up are two cues for the prehistoric segment of *THE ANIMAL WORLD* (1956) by Paul Sawtell, another prolific genre composer, here fusing the sounds of Debussy and Stravinsky before settling into more typical genre fare. Such offbeat touches make Sawtell worthy of more consideration.

As on previous *Monstrous Movie* Music recordings, Masatoshi Mitsumoto's conducting is superb, while not slavish to the originals, he doesn't deviate so much that anything sounds amiss. Scenerter himself supplies the liner notes that are more like mini film books that inserts.



Film Score Monthly CDs are available at [www.screenarchives.com](http://www.screenarchives.com). *Monstrous Movie Music* is available at [www.mmmrecordings.com](http://www.mmmrecordings.com).



## LUGOSI'S DRACULA CAPE

Continued from page 16

In 1981, Todd Feiertag was intrigued by a *Life* magazine article picturing collector Clark Wilkinson wearing the cape and bending over a coffin displaying a prop dummy from *FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER* (1958). This was part of Wilkinson's "Horror Monster Room" in his eight-room Hollywood Museum of the Movies in Wisconsin. Wilkinson displayed the cape on a six-foot plywood cutout poster of Lugosi as Dracula, with a mechanical bat flying above.

Feiertag (pictured here with the Witch's Dungeon Lugosi figure) is primarily a collector of rare film posters, not props or costumes. But in 1986, he noticed a small ad in *Classic Images* by Wilkinson, offering the cape for sale. The opportunity to acquire a legendary cape actually worn by Lugosi couldn't be ignored.

Forrest J Ackerman has, in his collection, the cape-coat worn by Lugosi in *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* (1956). However, only two full-length capes worn by Lugosi as Count Dracula are known to exist. Bela Lugosi Jr owns the full cape his father wore in *DRACULA* (1931), and Todd Feiertag owns the cape from *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN*.

It's something any fan would go batty over.



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**ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN** (1948) starred (this will surprise you) Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, with Glenn Strange (*Frankenstein's Monster*), Bela Lugosi (*Count Dracula*), and Lon Chaney Jr. (*The Wolf Man*) in splendid support.

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## FORRY ACKERMAN

Continued from page 17

special effects and makeup; dear friend and collector Bob Burns and his wife Kathy, who have cameos in the new *KING KONG*; Basil Gogos, star artist of many covers of the original *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine; Joe Moe, my friend and constant companion; and Paul and Hoiace Davids, who are producer, director and film executive from Universal Pictures releasing the documentary *THE SCI-FI BOYS*. At one point Peter Jackson joined us and introduced me to his family. Peter and our whole table of fantasy figures discussed everything from his new *KONG* to the latest in the further education of the group's children. Also present in the gathering were Naomi Watts (*THE RING*, *KING KONG*), Adrian Brody (*KING KONG*), Russell Crow (*VIRTUOSITY*), and Donald Sutherland (*DON'T LOOK NOW*, *DAY OF THE LOCUST*, and the 1978 remake of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*). Also noted were Patricia Arquette (*MEDIUM*), Teri Hatcher (*LOIS AND CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN*), and director Ang Lee (*BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN*).

Recently, at a Hollywood paper show I renewed my acquaintance with child star Sybil Jason (who costarred with Al Jolson in *THE SINGING KID*, now a mature woman; Candy Clark (*THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH*, remake of *THE BLOB*), who gave me a welcomed kiss and embrace; and for the first time met Donnie Dunagan (who as a blonde, curly-cue child had been carried under the arm of Boris Karloff in *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN*). Also, I attended a local convention called *HAUNT X* as a

guest of talented effects artist Tim Turner ([www.theghoulshgalleries.com](http://www.theghoulshgalleries.com)). I enjoyed getting together with old pals Ron Chaney, Bela Lugosi Jr., Sara Karloff, Tom Savini, and Michael Berryman. I also ran into the Chiodo Brothers in the dealer room. It was the first large event that I've covered without the use of a wheelchair. It seems my 200 repetitions per day on my stationary Schwinn are really doing the trick. I guess I have to revise my answer when people ask the secret of my longevity. I used to say, "I never drink or dope or exercise and I eat McDonalds three times a week." Nowadays, I don't do McDonalds too often and the exercise bug seems to have bitten me. Can booze and pills be next? Never. *SCI-FI IS MY HIGH!*

Very sad news. My beloved Ackermascot and best furry friend Mr. Orange the cat (aka: Orangey Robot, Butter-scotch, Monsieur L'Orange, Orange-ness Monster, Orange Puddins, etc.) lost a battle with an automobile. He is sleeping peacefully forever under his favorite lemon tree in the shady backyard of the Acker-mint-mansion. He is missed every day. He is remembered lovingly.



## SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

Continued from page 71

megahunk John Wesley Shipp as Barry Allen, the police scientist who, struck by lightning and soaked with dangerous chemicals, becomes Central City's Scarlet Speedster. Appearing with Shipp were lovely Amanda Pays as S.T.A.R. Labs scientist Tina McGee and Alex Desert as Barry's loyal coworker, Julo

Mendex. Opposing *The Flash* were such nasty villains as *The Trickster* (Mark Hamill), *The Ghost* (Anthony Starke), *Captain Cold* (Michael Champion), *Mirror Master* (David Cassidy), and mad biker Nicolas Pike (Michael Nader, who played Pike in the TV pilot that preceded the series). The baddies rarely looked the same as they did in the comic books, but they were good, lethal fun.

**THE FLASH: THE COMPLETE SERIES** shows that the series was virtually a testing ground for *BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES* (1992-95), which premiered two years later. Barry Allen's Central City is very much inspired by *film noir*, just as is Gotham City in the *Batman* cartoons. *FLASH* composer Shirley Walker performed the same duties on *BATMAN*. And Mark Hamill's *Trickster* is unquestionably a *Joker* of a different color.

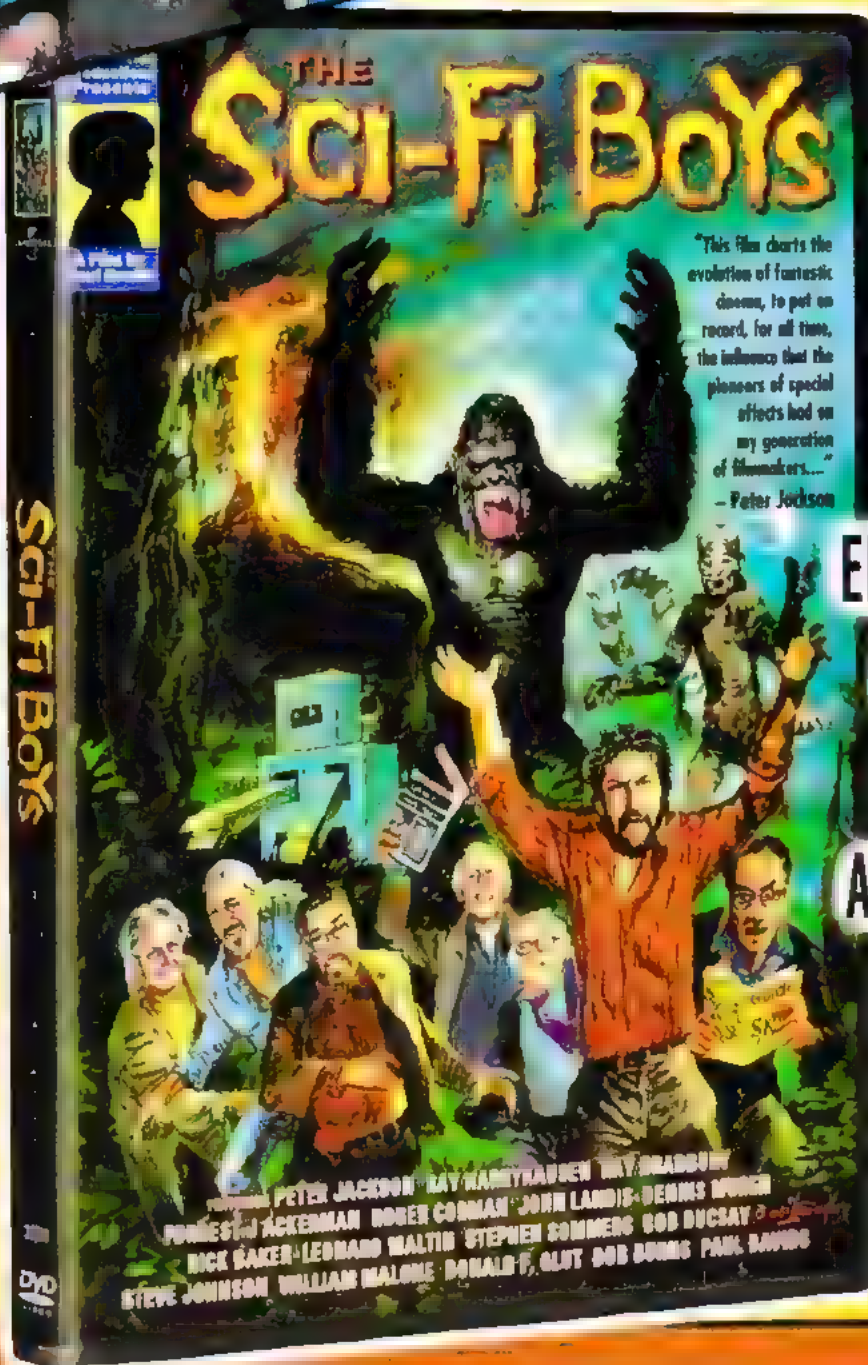
The two-hour telefilm and all 21 episodes of the series are available in this eagerly-awaited DVD package—but alas, they come without a single extra. Unforgivable, when the show's stars are still available for interviews and commentaries.

—Drew Sullivan





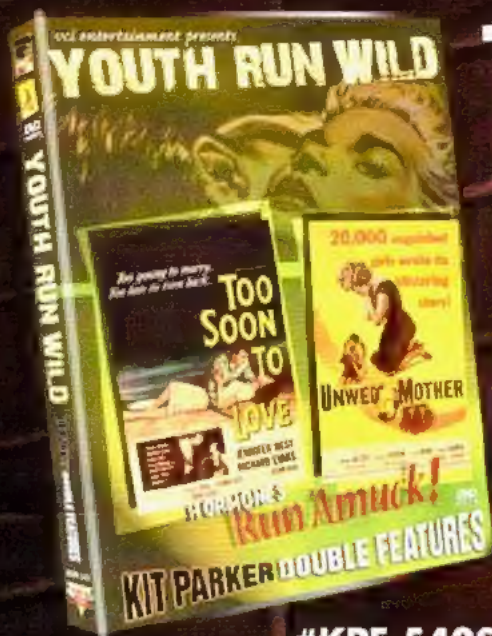
# THE Sci-Fi Boys



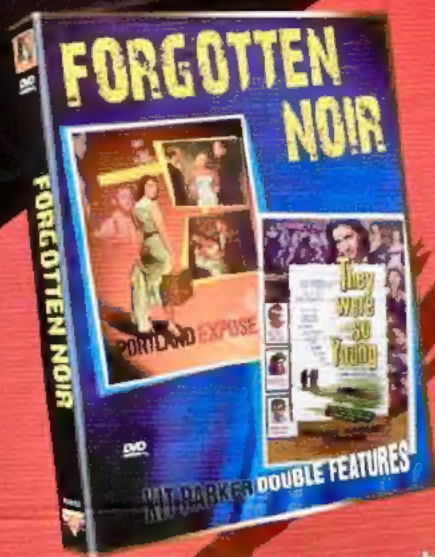
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